“Smells Like Teen Spirit” Drum Transcription

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MARCH 2024

Hard-Rock Icon
Mikkey Dee
Of Scorpions

Dirty Honey’s
Jaydon Bean

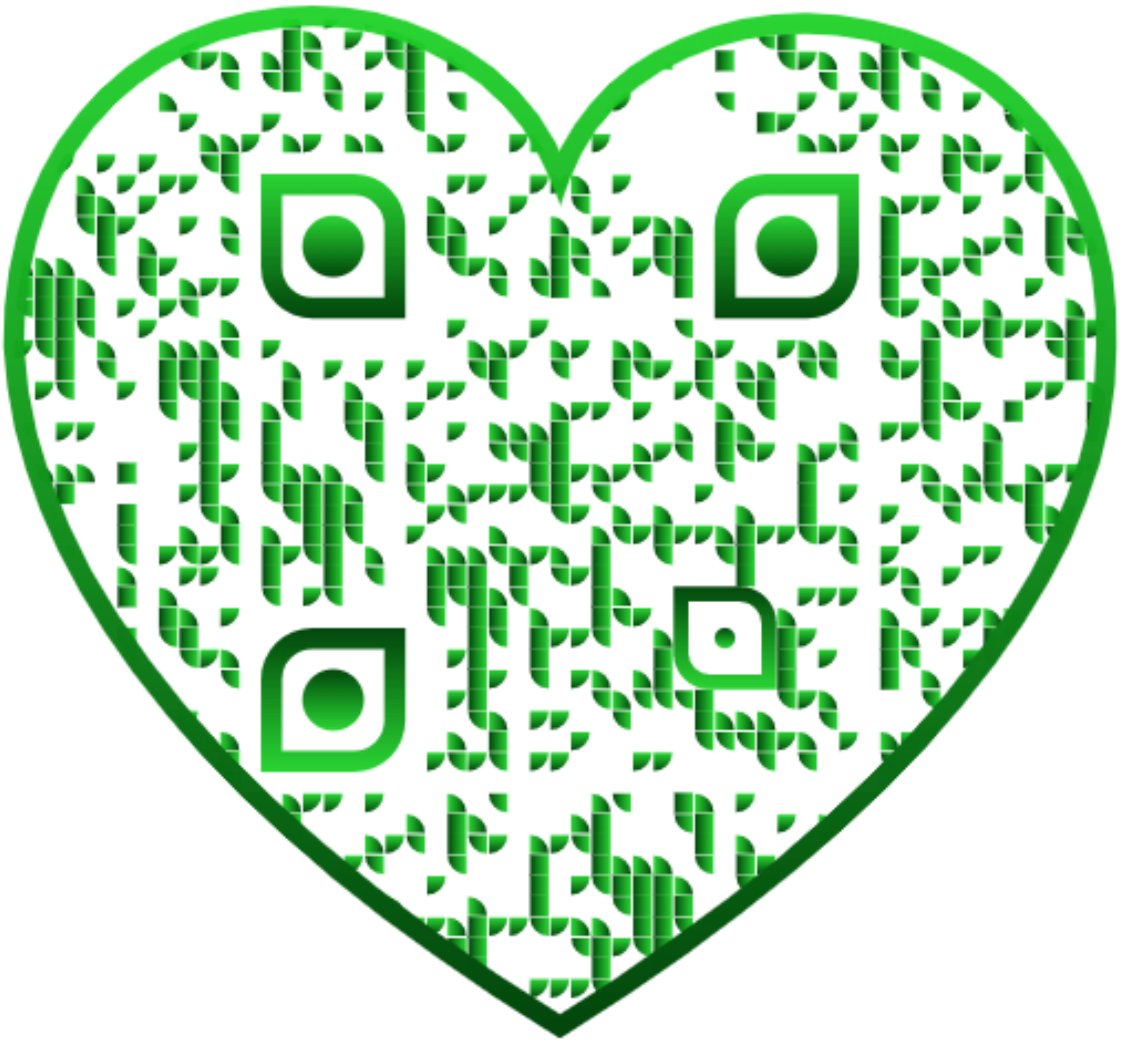
Educator
Andy Gander

Jazz Drummer
Michal Miskiewicz

Jazz Insights from
Peter Erskine

Double Bass Drumming from
Bobby Rondinelli

Pitbull’s Drummer
Carlos Palmet



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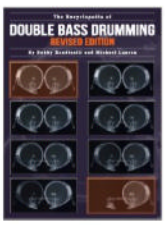

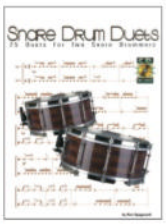

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Four Generations and Four Countries

As we were assembling this month's issue of *Modern Drummer*, I discovered a hidden theme. It was not obvious to me until just now. It turns out that this month's issue features four generations of drummers from four different countries. *How cool is that?*

Our drumming elder statesman is Mikkey Dee from Sweden, and his stories of touring the world in Motörhead and Scorpions are very entertaining and educational. Descending in age, the next drummer is educator Andy Gander from Australia. Andy's commitment to advanced rhythm is contagious, and his study of self-development is inspiring. Michal Miskiewicz is the next youngest drummer in this month's issue, Michal is one of Poland's top jazz drummers. His trio just did a week of shows with saxophonist Joe Lovano at New York's famed Village Vanguard. Baby faced drummer Jaydon Bean is from the United States and is rocking hard with his band Dirty Honey, they just got off a European tour opening for Guns 'N Roses. Jaydon is bringing his youthful energy and varied musical background to modern day rock 'n roll.

Drumming today is a multi-generational and global endeavor. It might be naïve of me to think, but in today's climate of personal, national, and international division, I really believe that drumming can bring the world closer together.

Have you ever watched the audience at a rock concert or a jazz club? No one cares what your political views are, and no one cares how old you are. Everyone is just there to have a good time, forget the problems of the day, and groove. Whether it is people singing along and having a great time at a Scorpions show at their Las Vegas residency, people moshing and crowd surfing at a Motorhead or Dirty Honey show, or jazz lovers enjoying a sold-out show at The Village Vanguard watching Joe Lovano and Michal Miskiewicz mixing it up. No matter what the musical style or venue, watch the crowd clap after every solo, cheer in excitement, and be enveloped in the excitement and feeling of great music and drumming.

You could even get lost in someone else's musical achievements. Watch a beginning drum student (of any age) play his or her first beat or enjoy a young band nail (this month's drum transcription) Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," or witness an advanced drum student (finally) play the polyrhythm of 7 over 4 successfully for the first time.

Music represents the best of us. Emotion, power, brother (and sister) hood, creativity, inspiration, and fun! And as we all know, at the center of any great band is the drummer. No matter how old or young we are, or where we're from, music and drumming is a universal language. Just read the articles in this month's *Modern Drummer*, we all have something to share (and learn!)

Maybe the drums can save the world!

Mark Griffith
Editor-in-Chief & Director of Content

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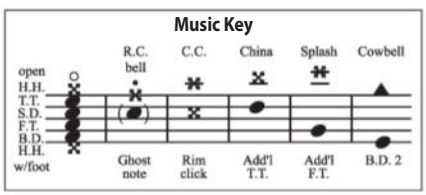

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Bryan's Fibes Homage

This month's Kit of the Month comes from Cleveland, Ohio's Bryan Beyer. The kit is a Fibes clear Crystalite setup that he uses in his Pink Floyd tribute band called Dark Side of the Moon.

The kit shown consists of 8x12 and 9x13 rack toms which sometimes get subbed out for 8x10 and 8x12 inch or 9x13 and 10x14 inch toms. The floor toms are 16x16 and 16x18, and the bass drums are 24 and 22 inch. The Roto Toms are 6, 8,10,12. Bryan's snare drums are constantly rotating, but they include a 6.5" Fibes sft, a 5" Fibes fiberglass sft, a Slingerland 6.5" COB sound king, and a Ludwig Supra. Bryan's cymbals are all Paiste, and include a mixture of 2002, Signature, and Giant Beat.

I already had these drums when I joined the Floyd tribute band. I decided to use them on stage with the band because Nick Mason actually used a Fibes setup around 72/73. I thought it would be fun to pay homage to Nick Mason with the Fibes kit, but it also just looks great under stage lights and sounds fantastic! They are a mixture of original 1970s "Martin era" drums and later 2000's "Austin Texas" era shells.

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As Time Goes By

By Peter Erskine

"The fundamental things apply, As time goes by …"

So goes the song written by Herman Hupfeld in 1931, made famous by its appearance in the classic film, *Casabalanca*. The man who composed the score for that film and others was Max Steiner. He and fellow Viennese composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold are credited with creating the sound and template for symphonic film scoring. There'd be no film score to "Star Wars" without the film score to "King's Row" (composer and living treasure John Williams would be the first to credit Korngold). I mention these heroes of movie music because I just completed an intensive two weeks of work in Vienna. The first week was focused on the music of Steiner and Korngold in the recording studio, and the second week was focused on the flugelhorn playing of Franco Ambrosetti, accompanied by strings and rhythm section in Vienna's famed Konzerthaus. I was required to remember and utilize all of those drumming survival tips that have appeared in books but bear repeating now. Or, in other words, *"the fundamental things."*

Working backwards, it was with a smile that I looked down at the pair of brushes laying atop my snare drum, waiting to be picked up for use while delicate music was being played by the small string "kammerochesters" (21-piece string orchestra). If you've ever tried to pick up a pair of brushes SILENTLY from a snare drum without the following bit of advice, you'll appreciate how difficult it can be to operate in ninja mode (silent but deadly … *come on, let's have fun!*) Brushes are designed to make a sound, so it makes sense that any handling of them will most likely result in a scrape, blip, or a bonk. That is, unless you pick them up like this:

Using the weight of your hand where the wrist meets the palm, simply push down on the overhanging part of the brush in each hand and they will lift silently off the drumhead as if by magic! Mastering this will only take the slightest bit of practice, but this musically considerate gesture will be appreciated by all, even if noticed by none (*that's when it's most effective, when no one notices!*) It works every time, I promise you. If you find yourself in the middle of a broadcast, recording session, or playing anywhere that quiet is an issue, you will thank your lucky stars for knowing this trick.

Speaking of quiet… Breaking the silence and TRYING to play that first note in exact synchronization with the bass player is a challenge. No matter how you do it, things sound uncoordinated, forced, rushed, or late. It is impossible to break the silence gracefully. That is, UNLESS you allow the bass to play the note by themself and then glide/sneak in with a sweeping motion on the drum head that will naturally be a crescendo from inaudible to mezzo-something. The ear of the listener will connect the dots and you needn't try to play in perfect synchronization with the bassist on the first note. TRY IT… *You're welcome.*

Speaking of snares, it is not necessary to *always* play the brushes with the snares ON. Needless to say, basic musical essentials follow in playing ballads, play with focus and quiet intention. Then again, it's not *essential* to play ONLY brushes on ballads. So, snares on or off? And brushes on ballads? Yes, *but not always*. If one of the jobs of a drummer is providing rhythmic information to the band, then a lightly played stick on a cymbal (steady quarter or half notes) can be an elegant solution to help keep things together on the bandstand.

How loud? Well, most ballads should be soft. But a simple truism can best guide you: if you cannot hear all of the instruments on-stage while you are playing, then you are most likely playing too loud. SPEAK UP during a soundcheck if things do not sound right! Recently, while using our valuable soundcheck time for rehearsing, I had to stop the music making to ask the front-of-house engineer, "Did you just turn up the bass volume while he was playing a solo?" He answered, "Yes." I had the floor at that point, so I told him in agreeable but no uncertain terms, "I am playing softer, you do not need to turn him up. WE adjust the volumes. YOU sit back, listen, and enjoy, without touching anything." Why bother playing dynamics if the sound engineer is going to second-guess and become the sound level puppeteer? I am in complete disagreement with musicians handing over dynamic control to someone who does not know their music. Artificial volume enhancement … *no thank you.*

Bring a pencil with you to any and all rehearsals, and when someone provides a piece of direction or instruction, especially if it regards to "road map" or structure of the tune, WRITE IT DOWN. It is a discourtesy to the music director to NOT write it down. Because you will NOT remember. I write down anything and everything I need to see at a glance during a concert to help me play my best for the sake of the other musicians and the music.

Record the parts of your rehearsal that will enable you to best know what to play. If I record long portions of a rehearsal, I will most likely scan through the recording to check on beats, balances, and boo-boos. Otherwise, rehearsal is an ALL EARS ON DECK experience when the music is being made. Do your best to be attentive, polite, ready, and in the moment.

POSTURE REMINDER. The more you sit up with your back straight, the more open your body will be to the music, and the more accessible your touch will be. Anything and everything I say about volume has to do with touch and tone. Everything I say about how a beat feels has to do with touch and tone. And when I'm sitting up and breathing well and playing with my eyes and ears open, THIS is when I find my musical freedom.

I can't say that I've done it *all*, but I've done *a lot*. Discovering that Papa Jo Jones really knew what he was doing and emulating that part of him (his total being on the drums,) has made my drumming more joyous than ever before. If I may repeat the exhortation: TRY IT … you'll like it. And you'll want to, "Play it."

Here's looking at you, kid.

Check out Peter's drummer profile page, and get a copy of his Legends book at moderndrummer.com

NEW and NOTABLE

Pearl's Midtown Series All-In-One Drum Set With Giggable Hardware.

At home on the street and stage, Pearl's ultra-portable Midtown Kit has become a vital tool for the gigging drummer on the move. Pearl offers Midtown as a complete drum set with sturdy, lightweight hardware to give the metropolitan player a total solution for the downtown sound.

This reduced footprint four piece kit comes standard in a choice of three wrapped finishes with the single-braced hi-hat, cymbal boom, and snare drum stands, as well as a locking bass drum-mounted cymbal holder, kick drum lift, and pedal at an exceptional price.

"We really wanted to make sure the shells and the hardware on this kit could stand up to the impact of an actual gig, so we really put this kit through its paces," says Pearl Corporation Director of R&D Raymond Massey (himself a working drummer in Nashville, TN.) "We really feel like this is a set-up you'll want to travel with, because breakdown, set-up, and cartage is a breeze!

Midtown Series Drums come in a wrapped finish with 16x14 bass drum w/included riser, 13x12 floor tom, 10x7 tom, 13x5.5 snare and Single-Braced Hardware pack. List Price: $833.00, MAP: $499.99

Pearl Adds Ash With Makha DadoLoc Shell to The StaveCraft Snare Drum Collection.

Producing sharp sonic focus and full-bodied volume for the heavy player, StaveCraft snares are a startling addition to any pro player's drumming soundscape. Now, these 25mm thick solid snare shells are available with the option of premium beveled Ash models to add increased biting CRACK! to your sound.

"Ash has always been a favorite shell wood for me," admits Pearl Corporation Combo Marketing Manager Kevin Packard. "It's a harder wood with a brighter voice and a more visually pronounced grain. In addition, the care and attention to detail that goes into the forming of each of these shells grabs you every time you look at them, so the combination of sound, feel, and look really inspires an awesome playing experience!"

Like pieces in an intricate puzzle, each two-layer stave shell receives an added stave of alternating Makha wood in the center Dado channel, increasing total shell strength by 50%. The shell is then lathed to a perfectly round 25mm thickness, hand lacquered, and fitted with our Swivel Tube Lugs and MasterCast die-cast counter hoops for added volume and tuning precision.

StaveCraft snare drums are also available in Makha with Thai Oak DadoLoc or Thai Oak with Makha DadoLoc shell options in two sizes for the perfect fusion of classic artistry and new-school performance. For more information on Midtown Series and Pearl Snare Drums, go to **pearldrum.com.**

Doc Sweeney Brings Every Nuance of Your Playing Into Focus

Doc Sweeney is always looking for ways to create instruments with truly distinct sound characteristics. With our HolloCore snare firmly planted on the fat / punchy side of the sound spectrum, we directed our efforts to creating a snare for the other end: sensitive and highly articulate

The Focus Series (FS) design is based, in part, on Slingerland's Tone Flange snare of the 1930s. Whereas the Tone Flange uses a detachable metal flange to reduce the internal diameter of the shell (a holdover for their days as a banjo maker), we have created a one-piece Maple shell that reduces the internal diameter just below the batter head to 11". In doing so we direct energy to the center of the snare side head, creating a highly sensitive snare with astounding articulation. The extra mass on the batter side gives the snare plenty of crack. The FS 6x14 stave Maple shell starts out 1.5" thick, which is then milled using proprietary CNC technology to create the shell. The shell

wall thickness of 0.375" — with 45 degree bearing edges on batter and snare sides.

Focus Series snares are at home in a wide variety of settings, but shine particularly well in more nuanced ones where the drum's enhanced sensitivity helps focus every subtle articulation you bring to the table. FS snares are outfitted with Evans Strata 1000 batter / 300 snare side heads and 20 strand German steel wires.
docsweeneydrums.com

PDP Celebrates 25th Anniversary with New Concept Series Snare Drums and Hardware

Concept Series Snares

Pacific Drums and Percussion (PDP) announces the Natural Satin Brushed Aluminum, Brass, and Copper snare drums to its award-winning Concept Series. The PDP brand was founded in 1999 by Drum Workshop Inc. (DW) to provide boutique-inspired, player-friendly drums, pedals, and hardware with best-in-class build-quality to more drummers around the world. Since its inception, the accessible brand has expanded to include the award-winning Concept Series drums, hardware, and accessories.

The 6.5x14 Concept Series snares have a rolled and double-beaded 1.2mm shell. They are fitted with chrome hardware which includes PDP's stylish dual turrets lugs and DW's high-end MAG throw-off™, True-Pitch™ tension rods, and Remo drumheads. The classy, brushed exterior gives a vintage-style satin appearance that looks great under stage lights. The light-weight Natural Satin Brushed Aluminum snare offers a unique sonic experience with its round attack, sparkling treble, and dry resonance. The louder Natural Satin Brushed Brass snare produces a heavier, fatter attack, with a bright, sharp crack and mellow overtones. The Natural Satin Brushed Copper snare offers a cleaner, darker sound, which has plenty of low-end emphasis and an organic warmth.

Concept Series Hardware

The 5-Piece Hardware Pack, 300 Series 4-Piece Hardware Pack, 12" Round-Top Throne, and 800 Series Medium-Weight Concert Snare Stand were designed in California by DW. The versatile, tour-ready PDP Concept Series Hardware Pack is a heavy-duty setup featuring lightweight, composite memory locks, heavyweight tubing, double-braced legs, and oversized anti-slip rubber feet. The 3-legged hi-hat stand has a Quick-Release hi-hat clutch and lateral cymbal seat adjustment for dialing in hi-hat cymbal angles and contact. The two cymbal boom stands are fitted with Leverage Ratchet Handles™ with ½" boom arms and a QuickGrip™ clamp system. The snare stand includes a ball-and-socket basket adjustment the pedal is a dual-chain single bass drum pedal.

The new PDP 300 Series 4-Piece Hardware Pack and PDP 300 Series 12" Round-Top Throne offer a lightweight and durable hardware option for drummers. The double-braced hardware setup includes a 3-legged hi-hat stand, chain-driven single bass drum pedal, straight cymbal stand, and a lightweight snare stand. The streamlined, lightweight, and durable throne has a padded top with an X-brace and single-braced legs. All feature anti-slip feet. The 800 Series Medium-Weight Concert Snare Stand is a double-braced unit designed for stable orchestral performance and easy mobility. Designed by DW in California, it features a Glide-Tilter™ basket adjustment, lightweight composite memory locks, low profile double-braced legs, and anti-slip feet.

To find out more about the new Concept Series snares and hardware and other PDP drums and accessories, visit **http://www.pacificdrums.com/** or look for **#TeamPacficDrums** on social channels.

Xvive PX Personal Mixing System

Drummer-friendly Monitoring

By Jason Mehler

For drummers who use in-ear monitors, it can be challenging to get the right mix of instruments, click track and backing tracks in your ears. It's nice when you can control the mix right from your seat. Traditionally, this involves having a standalone mixer at the drum kit, which can get cluttered with cables and, depending on the routing, can be another point of failure during the show.

Audio technology company Xvive has come up with a solution to make it easier for musicians to control their own mix during performance. They call it the PX system. The PX system is a three- channel personal mixer that can clip to your belt or music stand and is fed by a single cable that runs to the main mixer. For this month's product close-up, I was provided the PX system and a pair of Xvive T9 in-ear monitors. In addition, I was also provided an Xvive U4 wireless as an alternative to the PX system for situations where the drummer needs more mobility during performance. Let's get a closer look at these monitoring solutions by Xvive.

What's in the Box(es)?

The PX System ships with three components; The PX-A Mixer/ Headphone Amplifier, the PX-B 3-Channel Snake, and EC25 25-foot Cat. 5 Ethernet cable. Also included is a nine-volt power adapter.

The T9 In-ear monitors are packaged in a nice retail box and include a zip-able carrying case, a quarter-inch headphone adapter, detachable rubberized cable, and several universal earpiece tips in various sizes of both foam and silicone material.

The U4 wireless system is also well-packaged in a black retail box that honestly, could be used as a carrying case, although it comes with a soft leather drawstring case for that purpose. Also included in the box are the wireless transmitter and receiver, an XLR to quarter-inch adapter and a USB to dual micro-USB charging cable.

Setting up the PX System

To get started, first you need to connect the PX-B 3-Channel snake to the monitor outputs on your main mixing board. The snake has 3 female XLR cables for this purpose. Note that any desired EQ or effects will need to be added at the main board, as the personal mixer only has control over volume levels.

Once the PX-B is connected to the mixer, you attach the EC25 25-foot ethernet cable to the etherCON port on the snake. You could use any ethernet cable, however, to prevent interference and signal loss, it should be a shielded category 5 cable, no more than 200 feet in length. Then you run the cable to the musician's location and plug in the PX-A personal mixer, which also has an etherCON port.

The PX-A mixer requires power, which can be supplied by two internal AAA batteries, or from the provided 9-volt power adapter. The power adapter plugs into the PX-B snake and uses POE (power over ethernet) to power the unit. This is great because it doesn't require an additional cable run; Everything travels over one cable to the personal mixer.

Aside from the individual channel and master volume controls, the PX-A has two additional functions, which may not be obvious at first glance. The first is the ability to control the left and right output for each of the 3 mixer channels. This is handled by a series of small on/off switches inside the battery compartment. The other feature is the ability to switch the power source between POE & battery. This control is located next to the master volume knob alongside a small blue LED light that indicates when the unit is turned on and receiving power.

Putting The PX System to the Test

I brought the PX System to the rehearsal studio where my drums currently live. The drums are set up about fifteen feet from the mixer, so the twenty-five-foot Cat. 5 cable was more than sufficient to reach my drum throne. I plugged the PX-8 snake into the monitor outputs on the mixer, and with the help of a few musicians, I configured a good preliminary mix of keyboards, drums, guitar, and vocals, which was all routed to channel one on

the PX system. I used a laptop to send backing tracks to the mixer, and then routed the signal to channel two. Finally, from the same laptop I fed the click track into the mixer and out to channel three on the PX system.

The PX-A has a strong metal clamp, which I attached to my belt. I then put on the Xvive T9 In-Ear monitors, which fit snuggly and felt very secure. At first, I didn't see the blue led light indicating power, but quickly realized that I had the wrong power source selected, so I flipped it to POE and it worked fine.

I hit play on the laptop to start the backing tracks as well as the click. I adjusted the volumes for channel two and three until I had the right amount of each. Once I had those two channels dialed in, we began playing to the tracks. I quickly noticed that the band volume was overpowering the click, so I adjusted the volume on channel one. Quick and easy! Without the mixer, I would've had to try and convey my audio problems to the sound guy or drum tech while playing. The volume controls are smooth, yet they have some resistance to them, which prevents accidental adjustments due to movement and friction. I returned to the main board a few times to tweak the band mix, but that was expected.

The Audio quality from the PX system was excellent, with very little noise. The dual balanced-armature T9 In-ear monitors sounded great with a clean response across frequencies and rich low end that rivals some higher-end models. Unlike with some universal style in-ears, I could hear the punch and tone of my kick drum, without having to adjust the seal of the earpieces.

Thoughts on the PX System

I found it quite easy to get the right mix in my in-ears. The PX-A has a powerful amp that has plenty of headroom. The belt pack is small and light enough to go practically unnoticed when attached and the single cable makes it very easy to work with. As for the in-ears, I did not suffer any ear fatigue after an hour of playing. The Xvive PX System combined with the T9 In-Ears seems like a great monitoring solution for drummers.

U4 Wireless System

As an alternative to the PX system, I wanted to test Xvive's U4 wireless monitoring system. Sometimes a drummer needs to have more mobility than a wired solution provides, wireless monitoring is essential in those situations. To test the wireless pack, I attached the U4 transmitter to the main mixer. This can either plug directly into an XLR output, or by using the included XLR to quarter-inch adapter, plug into a quarter-inch output. The signal on the U4 wireless system is mono, so only one output can be connected.

I attached the U4 receiver to my belt and used the same T9 in-ears to test with. The receiver is very simple and has only three controls onboard: A channel selector, volume control and power switch. It also has two LED lights; One that indicates the connectivity to the transmitter and another to indicate when the battery is charging. I powered on both the transmitter and receiver and selected the same wireless channel on both. They synched up in one second and a solid green light appeared on the receiver. With the 2.4ghz wireless frequency, it is common to get interference, so having six channels to choose from allows you to flip to a clean channel when problems occur.

Once attached, the band began to play. This time, unlike with the PX system, everything was mixed at the main board, and routed to a single output, which took a little back and forth to the mixer, but that is normal when you only have a single output for in-ears. The latency was surprisingly low. I really couldn't detect any, though Xvive states that there is five milliseconds of latency. That's pretty low. I love how small the wireless receiver is. It's almost unnoticeable. I was able to hop off the drums and move around the room freely, without audio dropout or crackles. As for distance, I went outside at least 50 feet without any apparent audio problems. Like the PX system, there was plenty of volume and the sound was clean.

Can the PX System be combined with the U4 Wireless?

So, you want to have the three-channel personal mixer but still maintain complete wireless mobility. Can it be done? The short answer is yes. However, it will require an additional Male XLR to male 3.5mm adapter cable. You can plug in the 3.5mm end to the headphone output of the PX system and then connect the XLR end to the wireless transmitter. Be aware that the headphone output is an amplified signal, so increasing the output volume may render some distortion. Also, the personal mixer will be stationary, attached to a music stand or the like. If this is ok, then maybe you'll want to try out the combo!

Expand the PX System

For bands or a group of up to five people, the PX system can be expanded with the PX-H Hub: a rack mountable breakout box that takes one ethernet input and distributes it to up to five PX-A belt packs. The PX-H sends the same three sub-mix signals to everyone connected.

In Conclusion

The Xvive PX System is a great monitoring solution, especially for drummers, due to their stationary positioning at the drum kit. It's much easier than running and routing a standalone mixer, and it works really well. Furthermore, the potential to combine it with the Xvive U4 Wireless System gives you even more mobility and control. Hey, while you're at it, why not grab a set of Xvive T9 In-Ears to complete the package! All three products are solid.

The PX System, as well as the PX-H Hub and separately available PX-A mixer-headphone amplifier, PX-B snake, EC25 cable and A2 power supply, will all be shipping worldwide in Spring 2024. Retail price not yet available. The Xvive U4 Wireles System retails for $229.00 and the Xvive T9 In-Ear Monitors retail for $189.00. Check them out at: **https://xvive.com/audio/**

Scorpion Percussion Immortal Series Drumsticks

A Venomous Mix of Style and Functionality

By Jason Mehler

Though the company has been around since 2008, Scorpion Percussion has really made waves in the past few years. Maybe it's the cool factor. The drumsticks with the green grip and the menacing scorpion logo keep popping up on-stage with some of today's top rockers. These sticks have a vibe, and for this month's product close-up, I'll be checking out an assortment of Scorpion Percussion drumsticks to see if they live up to the hype.

What are we testing?

I received seven pairs of Scorpion hickory drumsticks to review. Each pair has a different length, diameter, finish, and tip. Six of the pairs are from their Immortal Series, they are: 5A sixteen inch with oval tip and lacquer finish, 5AX seventeen inch with oval tip and lacquer finish, 5A sixteen inch with oval tip and natural finish, 7A sixteen inch with ball tip and lacquer finish, 5B sixteen inch with oval tip and natural finish, and 2B sixteen inch with Acorn tip and Venom Grip finish. The other pair is a set of warm-up rods that they call the Emperor Warm Up 747. They are dipped in Venom Grip as well.

What is Venom Grip

Venom Grip is a thin, colorized (neon green) coating of water-based synthetic rubber, designed to reduce slippage while relaxing the drummer's grip for a more natural feel.

My Review

Drumstick lengths and diameters are largely a matter of preference, so for this review I will focus on the quality and finish of the Scorpion products as a whole, rather than review each pair of sticks individually.

Quality

Every pair of Scorpion sticks that I received have the following consistent characteristics: The sticks are tone-matched perfectly. The wood grain runs straight from bottom to top with few

potential weak points. The sticks roll on a flat surface without any wobble whatsoever. The tip shapes are uniform within each pair and do not vary in rebound or sound as the stick rotates.

Lacquer Finish

Scorpion's lacquer finish is subtle, meaning it's not super shiny or thick. The sticks feel comfortable to hold and you can still detect the wood texture under your fingertips, which gives a sense of confidence that the stick will not slide.

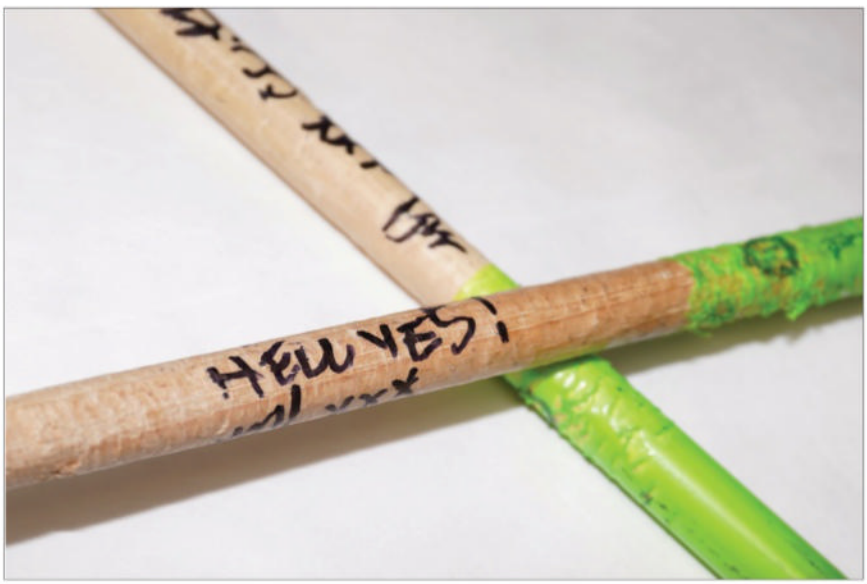
Natural Finish

The sanded natural finish on the Scorpion sticks is nice. Where other brands natural finish is almost polished, these feel raw, like they just came off the sander. They almost feel like there is saw dust still in-tack, although that's not the case. I'm sure under a microscope these would look interesting. Like Scorpion's lacquer finish, the natural finish has anti-slip characteristics.

Venom Grip Finish

I love the Venom Grip. Aside from the look, it is very functional. The rubberized coating is thin to the point where you can clearly read the printed writing underneath it, yet it is very effective. There is no peeling or cracking, even at the transition where the grip tapers off. The coating has minimal effect on the weight distribution of the stick, and the sticks roll on a flat surface as if there is no coating present.

As for feel, the venom grip has just enough of a rubber "give" to feel snug on your grip, without a sense of stickiness. The anti-slip properties of the coating can be clearly detected by sliding your grip from the untreated top of the stick to the holding position where the coating will catch and halt the slide. The grip performs even better when damp or wet, which is exactly what you would want for demanding environments such as a hot stage or venue.



Emperor Warm Up 747

The one pair of sticks that warranted their own review section are the 747s. They are basically a pair of dense, thick hickory dowels dipped in Venom grip. They are 16-inches long with no frills, other than the ever-present Scorpion logo.

I hadn't thought of using something like the 747s to warm up, although I do occasionally use a set of marching sticks. The problem with marching sticks for warming up (at least for me) is that they have the tendency to coax you out of the monotony of doing the simple and necessary warm up routines to get blood flowing to the hands. They are like the gateway drug to the more "choppy" stuff that does nothing for your muscles. These 747s on the other hand, have one obvious job: Warm Up! I will be using these for this purpose going forward.

A Third Person View

I recently had the privilege of watching Mikey Cox, drummer for Coal Chamber, in the most intense drumming performance that I've ever witnessed from stage left. Drenched in sweat and armed with his Scorpion signature 3A, green Venom-dipped drumsticks, Mikey annihilated the drums in a way that would send the Muppets' "Animal" into retirement. There is no better durability test for a pair of drumsticks than being in Mikey's hands for one song. Did he break the sticks? Yes! Several pairs during the show. But he'd probably break them if they were made of titanium. Those green sticks took a wicked beating and were the perfect companion to the chaos that is Mikey Cox. He gave me the surviving pair of his sticks after the show, which now sit in my collection.

Conclusion

Scorpion Percussion definitely has a good thing going. Their product is well-crafted, balanced, and extremely durable. Furthermore, their quality control is on point, and their branding is just plain cool. There is something huge to be said about a product that inspires you to be creative and different, while withstanding the most intense musical applications. No doubt that Scorpion Percussion has tapped into that with their Immortal Series drumsticks. Pick up a pair and see for yourself. Scorpion Percussion drumsticks can be purchased directly from the company at: **https://scorpionpercussion.com/**

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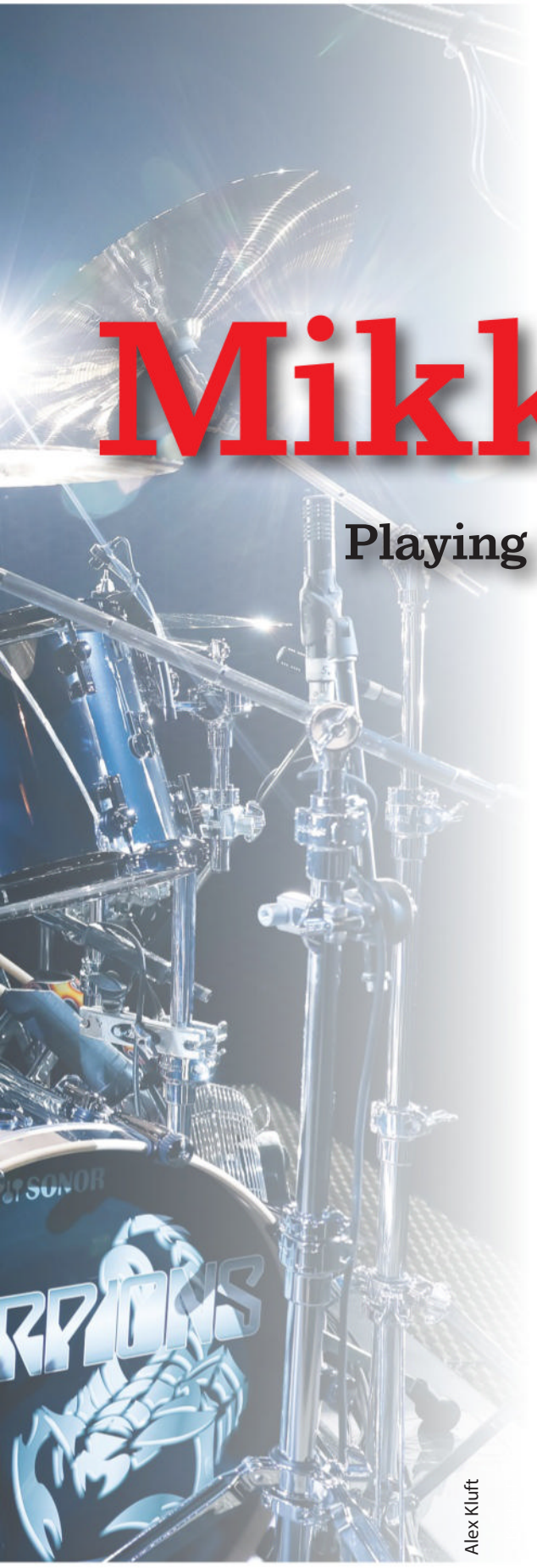
SCORPIONS



Alex Kluft

Mikkey Dee

Playing Heavy Music on the Drums

By Mark Griffith

From 1985 through 1989 drummer Mikkey Dee created a modern style of progressive hard rock drumming with the band King Diamond. The recordings and the drumming on *Abigail* and *Conspiracy* laid the groundwork for many of today's most extreme metal bands. After a short stint with Don Dokken and World War III, Mikkey joined Motörhead replacing Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor, and he remained a member of Motörhead for 25 years. In Motörhead, Mikkey's relentless drumming continued to influence the younger generation of hard rock and metal drummers. After Lemmy Kilmister's death, Mikkey moved on to replace James Kottak in Scorpions in 2016 and played on their most recent recording *Rock Believer*. Today, Scorpions is on the verge of another world tour, and their second residency in Las Vegas at Planet Hollywood. Mikkey Dee is a legend of modern hard rock and metal drumming!

MD: What music and drumming did you grow up listening to?
Mikkey: I come from a drum family. My uncle played drums and started a band called The Drifters here in Sweden. I have a cousin that played drums. He's six years older than me but he would let me come and hang out at his rehearsals. He was into Hard Rock in the late 60s, so I heard a lot of Cream, Jimi Hendrix, Johnny Winter's record *And*, and Black Sabbath. For me, the *big boom* was Deep Purple. I went to see them in 1971 and that was it for me, Ian Paice is my biggest drumming inspiration. He's the most dynamic and roundest hard rock drummer. I wanted to sound just like him. I love *Made in Japan* and *Burn* but every Deep Purple record and lineup is great. Then of course there was Brian Downey from Thin Lizzy. He was an amazing drummer. Brian was a very bluesy, jazzy, rock drummer. He was playing swing beats and swing shuffles in a hard rock environment. I got totally hooked on Rush's *All the World's a Stage* with Neil Peart, I love Steve Smith's playing with Journey, especially on *Captured*. I love Jeff Porcaro in Toto, I also love Steve Lukather's guitar playing, he's such a complete musician. Cozy Powell was amazing with Black Sabbath, Steve Negus from Saga is a great drummer, Leonard Haze from Y&T, and of course John Bonham and Charlie Watts. Most recently I've been listening to a lot of Saga, Queensryche, and Rush, and I've always been a sucker for live records.
MD: After your initial playing with King Diamond, you have made a career of taking the place of a lot of drummers, why do you think that has happened, and how do you approach replacing drummers in bands?
Mikkey: It's not the easiest thing to do, actually it's very hard. Coming from King Diamond into Don Dokken's completely new band, we had guys with a lot of experience who already knew the business and how to sound. But you still must be able to fit in and know when to push and when to step back. To me, that's common sense. When I joined Lemmy, Phil Campbell, and Michael "Wurzel" Burston in Motörhead, I had two options. I could either be a "Philthy Animal" replacement or put Mikkey Dee on the map. I obviously chose the second option. However, I was tough enough to go in the press conferences and say, "Look I will change Motörhead. This is not going to be the same Motörhead that you have listened to for 15 years, it will be different from "Ace of Spades" in 1980. Some of you might hate it, but hopefully most of you are gonna love it. And I believe I was right. But it was very important to make that decision and not to mess around and be insecure. Coming into to Scorpions has been even harder.

Scorpions is a band that's going to be 60 years old next year. I couldn't just parade in on my own terms saying, "I'm used to this, I'm gonna do this, I don't like this, but I do like this…" You just don't do that. You must get the feel for the band you're joining. I told the guys, "I will motorize you guys, that's my mission here, I will make us harder, tighter, and we're gonna have so much fun, that is my promise. And it's funny, after a year Rudolf told me, "We thought we were going to get a new engine, but with you, we got a whole new car!" That was a great thing to hear. Those guys know what they want, they know how to do their stuff, and I don't want to interfere with their ways of doing things. But at the same time, I demand respect because this is not my first picnic either. I've been doing this on the big stage for 40 years. I know what I want and it's very simple. If it doesn't work out like they or I believe it should, then we just go our separate ways, in a good way, with no hurt feelings. I'm an adult, I can take criticism. In fact, I must be able to take criticism, but I also will give some criticism when I see something that is not working. I'm not scared of that, if *you* play straight, *they're* gonna play straight, and that's how everything in life should be. As I said, that's common sense to me. I'm not an egotistic rock star, I never have been, and I never will be. All I wanna be is a decent drummer that plays well with the band. When I come into a band, I need to climatize myself to their music and those people.
MD: How do you climatize yourself to a new band's music? And what's the difference between playing in Motörhead and Scorpions?
Mikkey: I didn't rush into either band to be "Mikkey Dee!" I had to analyze the music, I went back to the early records, but I (pretty much) knew what I was gonna do. But it's a different thing to execute it. I already knew most of the Scorpions songs, I've been a big fan since the *Tokyo Tapes*, and when *Worldwide Live* came out, my ears really opened up to Scorpions.

When Motörhead became a three piece and Phil Campbell (Motorhead guitarist) was soloing, I had to get busier. That's when I told Lemmy to do a couple things differently. There were times that the

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I can take criticism. In fact, I must be able to take criticism, but I also will give some criticism when I see something that is not working.

band sounded thin, I suggested that he should play more eighth notes at times while I went up to a China to fill it up a bit.

With Scorpions it's the complete opposite. When Matthias or Rudolf solo, or when Klaus is singing a great melody, I gotta watch what I'm doing. I can't just go nuts on the drums; I have to play the music on the drums. In Scorpions there's a lot of things going on, there's little bits all over the place that I don't want to overdo, but I don't want to "underdo" it either. When there's a great melody or harmony somewhere, I gotta watch it and play simpler. But I'm playing much harder with Scorpions, I'm absolutely exhausted after a Scorpions gig.

MD: Are you playing harder with Scorpions than you were with Motörhead?

Mikkey: I hit MUCH harder with Scorpions. Tempo-wise and physically, I could not hit that hard with Motörhead. Most of the songs were very, very, fast. I would have killed myself if I hit that hard with Motörhead. With Motörhead I was trying to play more "round" because Motörhead music was very easy to play with a "square" approach. I like to use a lot of ghost notes, I'm digging into the snare. When people sat behind me at Motörhead shows they would say, "You do so much drum stuff in those songs that isn't necessary because you can't even hear it in the audience." But it created a dynamic that I enjoyed, and that was for me. I do that with Scorpions as well, but I don't have to create that dynamic with Scorpions because it's already there. I can play quarter notes on some stuff, with Motörhead we didn't have

that many dynamics in the music. With Scorpions all those ingredients are already in the music. My job is to be a very heavy and hard drummer. Of course, on some of the ballads, I have to be even more dynamic. Drumming-wise, it's two different worlds.

Scorpions is not an easy gig. I get really pissed off with people saying, "You're probably sitting up there sleeping through this show." I tell them to come and see me at the end of the show when I'm as red as a tomato. I lose three to five liters of water in every show, I go through two or three t-shirts in every show, and they are drenched. The Scorpions is a very, very, hard show.

MD: What did-do you do to stay in shape for gigs like Motörhead and Scorpions?

Mikkey: I play a lot of ice hockey, I'm on the ice two or three times a week. A good week of fitness goes like this: Personal trainer on Monday, play hockey on Tuesday, trainer on Wednesday, hockey on Thursday and sometimes Friday, or I go to my PT on Friday. The closer I get to the start of a tour the less hockey I play. I'm not playing full contact so I'm fine, but on the ice all you need is one bad move, and you could break your hand or shoulder. I have to be responsible. I like sports in general, and I have always stayed away from drugs, I've never done drugs in my life. I do enjoy a beer but these days it's just beer, no hard liquor.

MD: What do you look for from a band when they are inquiring about joining their band?

Mikkey: The first thing I'm looking for is satisfaction for myself. I can't sound good if I'm in a band just to please fans or other band members, I need to enjoy it. That's why I never jumped between bands for fame or fortune or whatever. When I've been happy in a band, I stayed. If I wasn't happy, I left. I look for a challenge. When I have joined bands, I have usually already known the guys. But if you have never worked together, you've never been under pressure together, you're never argued together, you'll never know what your differences are until you work together. When I'm jumping into a new situation, I always hope that everyone has common sense and are on the same

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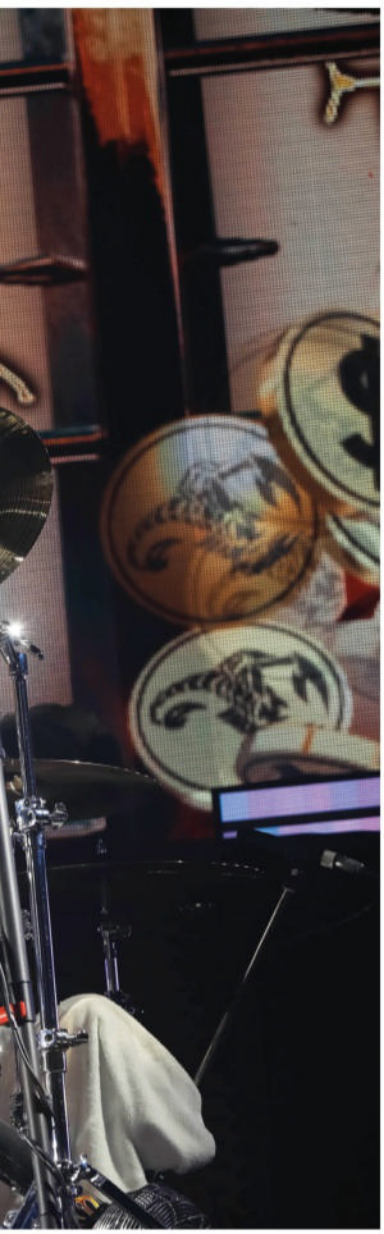
level. I play because it's fun, and I hope that the other guys in any band I'm joining are doing the same thing.

MD: You have said in many past interviews that Lemmy asked you several times to join Motörhead, and you declined because you felt that you weren't ready. That is a very interesting subject that I would like you to expound on, how did you feel "not ready" to join in Motörhead?

Mikkey: I'm really happy that I waited. But for the answer, we have to go all the way back to King Diamond. As a drummer, when you're young and starting out, you are touring the world, making records, and having some success. I did that with King Diamond in the early 80s. I was 18 or 19 years old, at that age you want to be the baddest drummer in the world, that's what's important. You have all these chops, you're on fire, you see your drumming through a pretty narrow lens, but you don't care. King Diamond toured with Motörhead in 1986, that's when I was first offered the gig. I was already friends with Phil, Wurtzel and Lemmy, and I felt invincible, but I was not ready.



After touring with them, I realized that Motörhead is not just a band, it's an institution, a lifestyle, it's so much more than just a rock band. And I didn't feel drumming-wise that I was ready. I hadn't earned my stripes, I felt good playing all the technical stuff with King Diamond, we were turning beats around and using all these weird stops, but I was not very comfortable just rocking out. My meter wasn't the best, and I just didn't feel ready. I was playing great with King Diamond from '86 through '88, I made the *Conspiracy* record in '89. When I left King Diamond, I kind of panicked because I couldn't play a bar without doing some weird drum stuff. I would never just play a regular drum fill, it always had to be complicated.

> In Scorpions there's a lot of things going on, there's little bits all over the place that I don't want to overdo, but I don't want to "underdo" it either.

Then Don Dokken asked me to join his new band, that came at the perfect time. I left King Diamond to join Don Dokken and record *Up from the Ashes*. That was a real meat and potatoes, Los Angeles, ROCK band. Don had all these classic songs ("Breaking the Chains," "The Hunter") with great heavy-hitting beats. I really learned how to do that. Don Dokken was a completely different type of band filled with amazing musicians. Don was a great drummer and bass player, and Peter is one of the best bassists that I have ever played with. Don knew how he wanted everything to sound, he is an incredible musician.

Less than two weeks before we were supposed to go out on a 12-month tour, Lemmy asked me to join Motörhead again. I told him that I couldn't just jump ship from Don, and that I wanted to give myself a little bit more time to prepare for Motörhead, and we could talk when I got back from the Dokken tour. After that tour I briefly took Vinny Appice's place in World War III and tried to help them get re-signed. That's when Lemmy called again. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm thinking about going back to Sweden for a couple of months because I need a little break." He told me to come up to Hollywood and record with Motörhead, that started my 25 years in the band.

MD: How did you finally "get ready" for Motörhead?

Mikkey: That's a funny story. We were going out with Ozzy on the huge *No More Tears* tour, and I booked five days for Motorhead to rehearse. Lemmy said, "Come on Mikkey if you play half as good as you did with King Diamond let's just do a couple of days of rehearsals," I said, "Look, we're going to do this massive tour, and we have *never* played together," so I booked three days of rehearsals. But the rest of the band never showed up! I learned 21 songs to open the tour in Saratoga, NY. After the show I remember thinking, "This was the *worst* show I've ever done in my life." And Lemmy was really excited saying, "We haven't sounded *that good* in 15 years!" As the tour went on, we got much better. Then we went out with Metallica on a stadium tour, after that we had Saxon open for us in Europe. We sounded pretty damn good at that point. But after the tour (surprisingly) Lemmy came to me and said, "Let's do some rehearsals at John Henry's."

MD: I'll bet they showed up that time.

Mikkey: Yes, and we rehearsed for three or four days, and the band improved a lot. From then on, Lemmy always wanted to rehearse. Even if we had just done four months in the US and

> I was 18 or 19 years old, at that age you want to be the baddest drummer in the world, that's what's important. You have all these chops, you're on fire, you see your drumming through a pretty narrow lens, but you don't care.

were taking two weeks off before we started in Europe, Lemmy would still want to rehearse. He really wanted to play, and because of that we took Motörhead to another level.

When I first got in the band, Phil, Wurtzel, and Lemmy had become very comfortable, and to me that is the most dangerous thing that can happen because you don't feel it when your playing is going down. Lemmy insisted that we didn't need to rehearse "Ace of Spades" or "Overkill," but I said to the boys, "Look those songs are supposed to sound shit-good, and we sound shit-bad. Motörhead HAS to sound shit-good, and they agreed. It is never good enough for me just to be satisfied, and that's where they were. But I wasn't satisfied. So while I'm kicking their ass (musically) they came back and kicked my ass big time, so it was a mutual kick in the ass.

MD: How did Motörhead kick your ass? Was it a physical or a musical thing?

Mikkey: It wasn't so much the physical part because I've always been strong, but musically Motörhead was the toughest thing that I've ever done. Motörhead had such a tight framework to work within, it was all black and white. Envision a framed picture on the wall that's black and white, I just wanted to add a little color to it. But I wanted the impression of black and white to remain. I could either destroy Motörhead songs with technical drum shit, or I could sit and play a boring beat right through the songs. But I didn't want to do either of those things. I said to Lemmy, "I don't just want Motörhead to sound good, I want it to taste good when we play." The attitude was already there, they created something very unique, but I just wanted to color it a little; to move on from 1975 and maybe bring it up to 1995. I wanted to put a little bit of modern, heavier, hard rock into Motörhead, and maybe let the punk rock influence become a little less. Before me, Motörhead was 60% punk and 40% rock. I suggested that we switch it to 40% punk and 60% hard rock. That was my vision. When we started writing music, we did it like that. Motörhead was always tight, but I wanted it to be tighter.

Motörhead was the toughest thing that I've ever done. Motörhead had such a tight framework to work within, it was all black and white.

Our fans wanted to hear the feeling of classics like "Ace of Spades" "Overkill" and "Iron Fist" on every record, but they wanted that feeling from the new songs. Phil and I were writing most of the music, and for every record we took that approach as far as we could, but sometimes Lem would come in and say, "That's a song for Rush or Aerosmith or whatever… And we would look that each other and say, "Yeah he's right." But we would tell him, "Look we're not going to write another *American Graffiti* record either, so we can move on from Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry riffs too. As a band, we created something really unique, but every once in a while we were so creative that we left the framework, and that was not Motörhead. That's what I mean by it being hard to write new music that sounds the same. We had to approach every new song in a way that we had done 100 times before, but somehow make it new and interesting. Listening back to the 12 studio records and the numerous live records I did with the boys, I think we really succeeded. I think every record has its own signature and still sounds like Motörhead with a fist in your face.

For instance, when I wrote the song "Sacrifice," which is a fairly tricky beat and rhythm, Lemmy said, "What the hell do you want me to sing to that?" It took him a week just to get the rhythm part of it, but it turned out to be Lemmy's *favorite* song on the record.

MD: What are some of your favorite Motörhead records and songs?

Mikkey: I am really proud of every record except *Hammered*. *Bastards* was a fantastic record, that was the first proper one with me. I was on one track of *March or Die* (Tommy Aldridge played on the rest.) I wrote some music for *Sacrifice*, *Overnight Sensation* was a little bit more melodic, had some great songs, and was maybe more radio friendly (if you will.)

MD: Why didn't you like *Hammered*?

Mikkey: We did *Hammered* around 9-11, and it was it was very weird timing. That's a good album, and some of the songs are great, but there's some songs that we should have spent some more time on. Both me and Lem had the exact same thoughts about that. Thom Panunzio was the producer on *Hammered*, he's a great producer but I think he felt a little intimidated by Lemmy, and you *cannot* let that happen. Lemmy was the sweetest guy in the world, but he really knew how to intimidate you and get you to go his way.

On the other hand, Cameron Webb produced *Inferno* with us. We all met at the Sunset Marquis for dinner, and in comes this young boy with a cap on and I thought, "Oh my God, not another one. He's gonna be eaten alive." Not that Lemmy was evil or angry, he just had a way. When he felt he was finished, he was *finished*! But if you convinced Lem to redo a melody or performance, it got much better. And if you could *somehow* convince him to do a third take, or maybe rewrite something, it became so much better.

When I saw Cameron, I thought that he wasn't gonna last through lunch with us. But I was so wrong. When I was tracking, I was banging through the first song. Afterward, I came into control room and Cameron said, "I heard that you were really great drummer, but that's not what I'm hearing." I couldn't believe it, but that was all planned, he got us to work our asses off and not be satisfied with anything. Phil hated Cameron after that first record, and Lemmy was screaming at him and calling him a pain in the ass. But after we heard *Inferno*, we loved him. Everything that we did from *Inferno* forward, Lemmy, Phil, and I all insisted on Cameron Webb producing, we made some spectacular records with him. He took us to another level sound-wise and performing- wise, and that was exactly what we needed at that point.

Howard Benson produced *Bastards*, *Sacrifice*, and *Overnight Sensation*. He took us from the "1975 sound" into the 90s. Howard has that sound in him. He wasn't intimidated by any of us, and we could be a real pain in the ass. We were so used to our own sound, we had producers come in and say, "I know exactly how you guys are going to sound," and we said, "No you don't, and there's the door." Some producers were fired before they even got into the studio. We would never compromise the Motörhead music. But here we are today listening back to the records we created and almost 5000 live shows, and I'm so glad that we stayed on the path. Lemmy absolutely refused to compromise anything. However, that also created some

problems.

I was always caught in the middle; all the business came through me, and I took it to Lemmy and Phil. I've always been interested in numbers and business, so the different opportunities would come to me. When would bring them to Lem, and he would always say, "No I don't want to do it!" Lemmy was very old fashioned, that made it both easy and hard to deal with him. Usually, I already knew what he was going to say about new opportunities. I knew that I would have to convince him that something was a good thing for Motörhead. That would mean that I had to convince him from 5000 different angles.

MD: How do you create a drum part?

MIkkey: With King Diamond, Motörhead, and Scorpions they were completely different approaches. With King Diamond, I would listen to every part of the song, because every song was about five songs in one. Part of a song would be complicated riffs, part of the song would be open and very flowing, and then there would be parts that were slow soundscapes almost like a movie soundtrack. I had to create different beats for every section and make the transitions between them nice and round. I needed to do that without overplaying or underplaying, that's how I approached the King Diamond music.

With Don Dokken it was about being a steady drummer. Solid snare and kick parts that stood out, simple drum fills, nothing fancy.

Motörhead was the hardest because of the framework that I spoke about. I could destroy every song by overplaying, and it wouldn't be Motörhead. It would be me showing off a bunch of drum shit. I wanted people to say, "Oh shit, what happened there? And rewind the song to hear that we actually turned the beat around without losing the forward motion and the feeling of a fist in your face. I wanted them to hear a drum fill that goes in and out through many measures and wonder how we got back to the main beat. But I had to do all of that within the framework of Motörhead. When I was creating drum parts for Motörhead, it was like being in a completely dark room trying to find something that tastes good. I would track a song and think this is a great song, but the drum part sounds boring, and what I'm playing is boring. I knew I needed to do something when we got to the second chorus, the bridge, or the solo. I had to constantly do something that sparked the music, but within the Motörhead framework.

Then we had songs like "Sacrifice," "In the Name of Tragedy," or "Burner" those are drum songs that were played with the attitude of, "Listen guys this is me, the tempo is going to be up there, and I will turn the thing around here, it'll get super weird going into the solo, and people are gonna be feeling upside down. That's just how this song works."

With Scorpions on the *Rock Believer* record I analyzed each song. You might have an amazing riff in one song, and because the guitar riff is so outstanding, I would identify that song as a

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guitar song and play it that way. I would listen to another song that Klaus would sing these amazing melodies and recognize it as a vocal song. I have to play music on the drums that goes with what the other guys are playing. If Matthias and Rudolf are doing a great harmony part, I'm going to play a nice quarter note on the bell and solid snare beat. When we get into the verse (which might be a little heavier) I can do a couple of nice choppy drum ideas and not destroy what they are doing. That's how I approach everything, I am playing music on the drums.

MD: What is the predominant instrument in your monitors with Scorpions?

Mikkey: I am listening to everything and everyone. Everything is equal. I listen to Pavel at certain parts of a song, and I listen to Mathias a lot. I listen to Rudy's rhythm playing, and I listen to Klaus all the time. I never understood drummers that just listen to the bass player or whatever, sure I know the song, and I know what they're playing, but if you don't have everything in your mix, you're missing a lot. I want to be a drummer that adds to the music, not just plays along to the music.

Records are one thing, but live is a completely different animal. I consider myself a live drummer, that's where I play very well. I've done a lot of records over the years, the Helloween record *Rabbits Don't Come Easy* was insanely hard to play on because I had no clue what they were about. I flew in and did that album in four days; I had no idea what they wanted. The music was very complicated, no two parts of a song were the same. We'd play a verse and a chorus, and the next around was different, and the third time was even more different that the first two. Those were 16-hour sessions for four days.

MD: How do you learn music?

Mikkey: I completely memorize every song. Every King Diamond record I tracked on my own alone, with nobody else playing and no other parts of the song. I had Andy standing by, because I might ask him to jump in after the first solo for two bars, so I knew I was at the right spot. But I always knew exactly where I was. I was so secure with the song, I knew it in in my sleep, every drum fill, everything. I knew 99% of what I was going to play, so I really didn't need them to play with me to hear the song. I heard

> We were so used to our own sound, we had producers come in and say, "I know exactly how you guys are going to sound," and we said, "No you don't, and there's the door."

Courtesy Of Mickkey Dee

Courtesy Of Mickkey Dee

the song in my head perfectly, that let me play harder and better and it actually made it easier. Then they tracked to my drum parts.

MD: Why did you start doing that?

Mikkey: There was no click tracks in those days and there was no Pro Tools. Usually, guitar players and sometime bass players have a tendency of speeding up and slowing down and that interfered with my playing, so if I wanted to lay down a great track, I just played the song in my head. I did most of Motörhead *Sacrifice* and *Bastards* like that as well.

MD: When you were doing Motörhead records, how long would a record take to finish?

Mikkey: Me and Phil usually worked about six to eight weeks on writing, Lemmy would come in almost every day, but while he was listening, he was writing like crazy. Lyrics and melodies came out of him like nothing. We recorded some very simple demos on a tape machine in rehearsals and we worked out the songs. Phil and I would take a song to an 80%, then Lemmy would add the bass and we would change some stuff. In the end, the three of us had (pretty much) an equal part in the process. We always wanted to be spontaneous, we didn't want to over analyze songs. For Motörhead, the best music came from the spontaneous stuff that we did, and then we would take it the studio. I cut the drums for every Motörhead record in about two days, and then the guys would work another month or two months on bass, guitar, solos, and vocals. Motörhead released a record every other year, we were on an 18-month cycle. We would do a record, then do a world tour, and then go straight into the studio to do another record. That was how we were working. Of course, every record had one or two songs that could have used some more thinking, analyzing, or demoing. The last Motörhead recording called *Bad Magic* is all live. We recorded that live, and a lot of the earlier stuff was also cut live. It always came out better that way. We also did the Scorpions *Rock Believer* record live.

> With King Diamond, Motörhead, and Scorpions they were completely different approaches

MD: Lemmy was a fascinating guy, what else did you learn from being around him?

Mikkey: Good manners cost nothing, but when good manners prove you wrong, you need to learn how to be a complete asshole too. Lemmy was an honest, fair, gentleman. He was fair with everyone, every crew member that worked with us will tell you the same thing. He treated everybody like Royals, and he gave the fans all the time in the world. After shows, I would sign all my stuff for the fans, and it didn't matter if it was raining or snowing, Lemmy would be sweaty-wet in his leather jacket and t shirt and stand out there signing every autograph and giving the fans all the time in the world.

I learned about being a good person and to be honest about your rock'n'roll from Lem. He couldn't stand record company people that would come around with their fake smiles. He would tell them, "Look I don't come to your office, so don't you come to mine. Do your job and don't show up in the studio and try to make us write certain types of songs. We write what we like and that's end of it. If people hate it, it's fine. If they love it, that's a bonus. But the three of us love it, and we're going to release what we like, that's it. He also had a great sense of humor.

He would be miserable today because people get offended by everything. People can't take a joke and you can't make a joke. That irritates the hell out of me too. Coming from Motörhead, we had the Monty Python-Faulty Towers sense of humor, we gave each other so much shit in such a friendly way, but never below the belt.

One time after a concert in the UK, I had to fly back to Sweden for some business before our next show. We had three days off and my flight back to the UK literally landed in time for me to hurry on stage for a sold-out show at the Manchester Apollo, no sound check, no nothing. We are playing our show and I do my drum solo and after my solo it's dead quiet. Thousands of people are sitting there absolutely quiet. It was bizarre, I wondered what the hell happened? It turns out that while I was gone, Lemmy and Phil printed posters and plastered them all over town, every pub, in the venue, everywhere! The posters said, "Please respect Mikkey Dee with NO applause after the drum solo."

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MD: That's hillarious.

Mikkey: Giving a joke, and taking a joke, that's been lost. If you say the wrong word today, you're getting sued. People take offense to everything. I think Lemmy would be miserable today, he left us at the right moment.

MD: I read that you insisted on not having your name on *March of Die*, because you only played on the one song, and Tommy Aldridge did the rest of it. I think that's a very commendable (and honest) stance to take, can you explain the meaning behind that?

Mikkey: Lemmy and Phil both wanted to put my name on the record, but I said no. I didn't want to take credit for Tommy's playing, he's a great drummer, he did a great job, they called him when they were having a crisis, the record was already finished by the time I arrived. I did record a couple of songs, but Tommy and I are two different drummers, and I did not want to take credit or have people thinking that was how I was playing. He's an amazing drummer but I knew my time would come. I knew I was joining the band, and would be doing the next record, and that would be my time.

There is a time and place for everything, and my place in most of these different scenarios is not "right now." Sometimes "your time" happens immediately, but sometimes you gotta be smart enough to say, "I'll join you boys, I'll take credit for the songs I played, I'll be in the picture, and people will know I'm in the band. Then I'll do the next record and be credited for what I played."

MD: You're a long-term thinker, you're seeing the long road. That is so rare today, especially in the entertainment business in general.

Mikkey: Absolutely, I'm so proud that I have the patience and the common sense to do that. But that's just me. But thank you so much for pointing it out. In any business or line of work there is always a time to step forward and a time to step back. I don't understand the people that just barge through a door and run straight ahead, they have no clue what's going on around them. It's OK to take small steps forward.

MD: Speaking of the long road, you have been with Sonor, Paiste, and DW Pedals for a long time, that's always great to see.

Mikkey: In 1984, Karl-Hienz Menzel and I made a handshake deal. I don't even have a contract with them. But they've been so good to me, it's the same thing with Paiste. Those two companies have been with me for my whole career. I bought their stuff on my own when I was a boy, and it just stuck with me.

When I left King Diamond in 1988, I was very worried that I would lose all my privileges. I got a phone call from both Paiste and Sonor, and they both said, "Don't worry about it, we sponsor *you*, we believe in *you*, *you* will have your stuff whenever *you* need it. That has always stuck with me. I have never abused those relationships; I know a lot of drummers that get endorsed and they just fish every little toothpick out of a company. I only order a kit, cymbals, or pedals when I need them.

I switched from Vic Firth to Wincent drumsticks because I had the opportunity to become a part-owner of the company here in Sweden, I'm not a part-owner anymore, but I still play the sticks. They are just the best sticks ever, it's a smaller company. But Vic Firth still makes wonderful sticks.

I play Evans heads today. I was with Remo for my entire career but for some reason they had a little bit of a dip several years ago, they made some really bad heads for a short while. My heads were breaking, and dots were coming off, there was something wrong. I think I went through 200 snare heads in the studio on one record. That's when I switched to Evans. Remo heads are fantastic again, but I'm very happy with all of the companies I work with.

MD: With the Scorpions new Vegas show and the new *Love at First Sting* tour, are you playing to a click for the production?

Mikkey: I have a click track on most of the songs because of the production, but there are a few where I don't have a click. It's just a reference, I'm pretty good at playing around the click. On certain songs I might be on the click, but sometimes I'm sitting right behind it in on a verse, and on top of it on a chorus.

The big difference with Scorpions is there is no breaks in the show. With Motörhead, I could just stand up and say, "Hey

Lemmy, let's have a drink I need to tune the snare, and they went back and had a drink while I was pretending to tune the snare or whatever. With Scorpions there's no time for any breaks, there is a part in the set where we play back-to-back songs for about 40 minutes straight, and a drum solo. We go from "Blackout" and straight into "Big City Nights." I can't even take one sip of water, there's no time for anything. It's not a walk in the park gig, I'll tell you that!

MD: I did want to ask you if the staging on the new Vegas residency was going to be different. On the last one you were set up very high away from the band, did that create any problems?

Mikkey: On the new tour I am at the top of a pyramid, we created that for the last year's *Rock Believer* tour. We wanted to bring everybody closer together because we recorded that record with all of us playing live, and we wanted to keep that feel in the music. That pyramid design finally got me down from being alone on that tremendously high riser. When I did the drum solo, I went up 25 feet in the air.

MD: Being set apart from everyone for a solo is one thing, but when you are playing with the band, that distance couldn't have helped, did you like being set apart from the band like that?

Mikkey: Not really, it was kind of boring and not the ultimate for me or the rest of the band either. That's the stage they had when I took over from James Kottak, they created that production in 2015 and he started touring with it in 2016. The whole idea with that stage was to keep it kind of clean looking, but on the new tour there's a massive stage and we are more centralized and more together. That works better. To tell you the truth, it would get lonely up there, Rudolf came up once in a while, Matthias was never up there, you could only access it from some steps behind the riser.

MD: It sounds like everything is going well with the new record, the new tour, and the Vegas residency.

Mikkey: It's nice to know that little ol' me, can make a difference in a band like Scorpions that has been around for 60 years. That's my gold medal. When we play live, I want people who see me play to think, "Oh my God I've never ever seen that much energy in two-and-a-half-hour show. That energy is my trademark, I see young bucks out there kicking ass for an hour and then they just lose it. I have a pulse rate of 180 for two-and-a-half-hours and I'm 60 years old. The heaviness and hardness are not just on the records, what you hear live is ten times more powerful, that's how I like it to be. I never wanted to be a drummer where people say, "Oh Mikkey, he used to be great." No way! I'll quit way before that.

When I was in Motörhead, we did a tour with Black Sabbath when Cozy Powell was in the band. And at the end of the tour Cozy came up me, put his hands on my shoulders and said, "Mikkey, I have to tell you what a pleasure it has been to be on tour with a REAL drummer!" That meant the world to me. And today when the guys in Scorpions tell me that they like what they are hearing and they trust me, that's all I need to know.

Check out Mikkey's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

Alex Kluft

DIRTY HONEY'S JAYDON BEAN CAN'T FIND THE BRAKES

By Mark Griffith

David Havlena

Dirty Honey is going full speed ahead, keeping the rock and roll flame burning and breaking the rules. Their song "When I'm Gone" was the first single by an unsigned band to ever reach #1 on the *Billboard* Mainstream Rock charts. They play kick ass rock and roll, write great songs, and they are all very talented musicians. Dirty Honey has opened for Guns N' Roses, Kiss, Slash, The Who, The Black Crowes, Rival Suns, and Alter Bridge; and have also co-headlined a tour with Mammoth WVH in 2022. *Loudwire* called Dirty Honey's debut album the 30th best rock-metal album of 2021. Their most recent record is called *Can't Find the Brakes* and is continuing the rock 'n roll tradition of great songs, great playing, and great live shows. Drummer Jaydon Bean is actually the "original" drummer in Dirty Honey, but he was not in the band for the first two records (we'll explain that later.) But he is hittin' hard and groovin' hard in Dirty Honey.

Originally from Utah, Jaydon is a highly talented musician who has "paid his dues" while living in LA for the last 14 years. His drumming career includes playing everything from big band music and alternative electronic music to cumbia music and jazz. But rock and roll is in his heart.

MD: Tell me about Dirty Honey?
JB: Dirty Honey is a group of phenomenal musicians and vocalists playing good songs and having a good time at the live shows. When people hear Marc Labelle's voice they are blown away. He's always perfectly in tune with amazing tone. John Notto is a phenomenal shredding guitar player and a great rhythm player. Justin Smolian is our insane bassist and he's got amazing fingers. Before I came back to the band, Corey Coverstone was their amazing drummer. To top it off, we all help write the music, and we have fun doing it. I like to play at a high level, and Dirty Honey goes out there and plays everything at a very high level, but we also have a lot of fun. Back when Corey was playing drums, and they were just starting to get some traction and get some real eyes on them; I told John that when people hear the musicianship in this band, it's going to blow people away. The other thing is that it's a fun band to go and see live. Our songs are great, but we've also got great parts for people who are into musicianship. When I hear some of our music I often think, "Drummers will appreciate this." At other times I think, "Guitarists are really gonna like this." It's the same with bass parts and the vocals. I want people to appreciate the focus that it takes to be a great and highly skilled rock and roll band playing great songs.
MD: What is your drumming background?
JB: I started listening to classic rock, funk, R&B, and soul when I was like a little kid. I was always riding around with my dad singing songs and air drumming. I love the Doobie Brothers, James Brown, Boston— those kinds of bands. I am geared towards that funky drumming sound that was also on the early Doobie records. They had John Hartman playing drums and he had a really tight high-pitched snare sounds and everything was pretty funky. In middle school I started getting into the jazz thing and then I was heavily into jazz from high school through college. I did a lot of big band playing and was in the high-level jazz bands. A couple times I was in the in the Intercollegiate All-Star Big Band and I got to play at the IAJE conference.

I moved to LA when I was 20, looking back, I probably should have waited until I was 21 so that I could actually go to the places that I was trying to play. The age difference affected "the hang," and being able to go out and meet people. There was a club in San Diego that (as I was walking on the stage) was checking my ID. I said, "Look I'm playing in two minutes, you gotta let me do the gig because the whole band is relying on me. They said all right, but you got to leave right after the set, you can't even take your stuff off the stage, your bandmates will have to do that. I told the club, I only came here for *one* thing, *to play the gig,* that's it. When I first moved out to LA the jazz gigs kind of disappeared, but it wasn't because I didn't love it, it was just because there just wasn't any money in it. Getting started in LA is a rough road. Since then, I've been all over the map musically, from rock to pop to hip hop, jazz, everything. I've also played in a bunch of Latin bands doing cumbias.
MD: Or as I like to say, "making a living."
JB: Yup, making a living baby, you know what's up.
MD: What types of studying did you do to enable you to work in all those styles and "make a living" as a drummer in LA?
JB: Other than just learning a few rudiments from a band director (that was really a trumpet player,) in middle school, I was self-taught until I was about 15. At the age of 15, I started lessons with Jay Lawrence. I'm originally from Salt Lake City, Utah and Jay is THE guy in Utah. He's the best teacher, he teaches at all the colleges, he's a phenomenal jazz big band drummer, a great vibes player, and a very knowledgeable teacher and musician. I started studying with him and stuck with him all the way through college. When I first moved to LA I hooked up with Alex Acuna and took a handful of lessons with him throughout the years. Throughout all of that study, I've learned that I'm a very good "practicer." I really figured out how to practice, and how to elevate my own playing.

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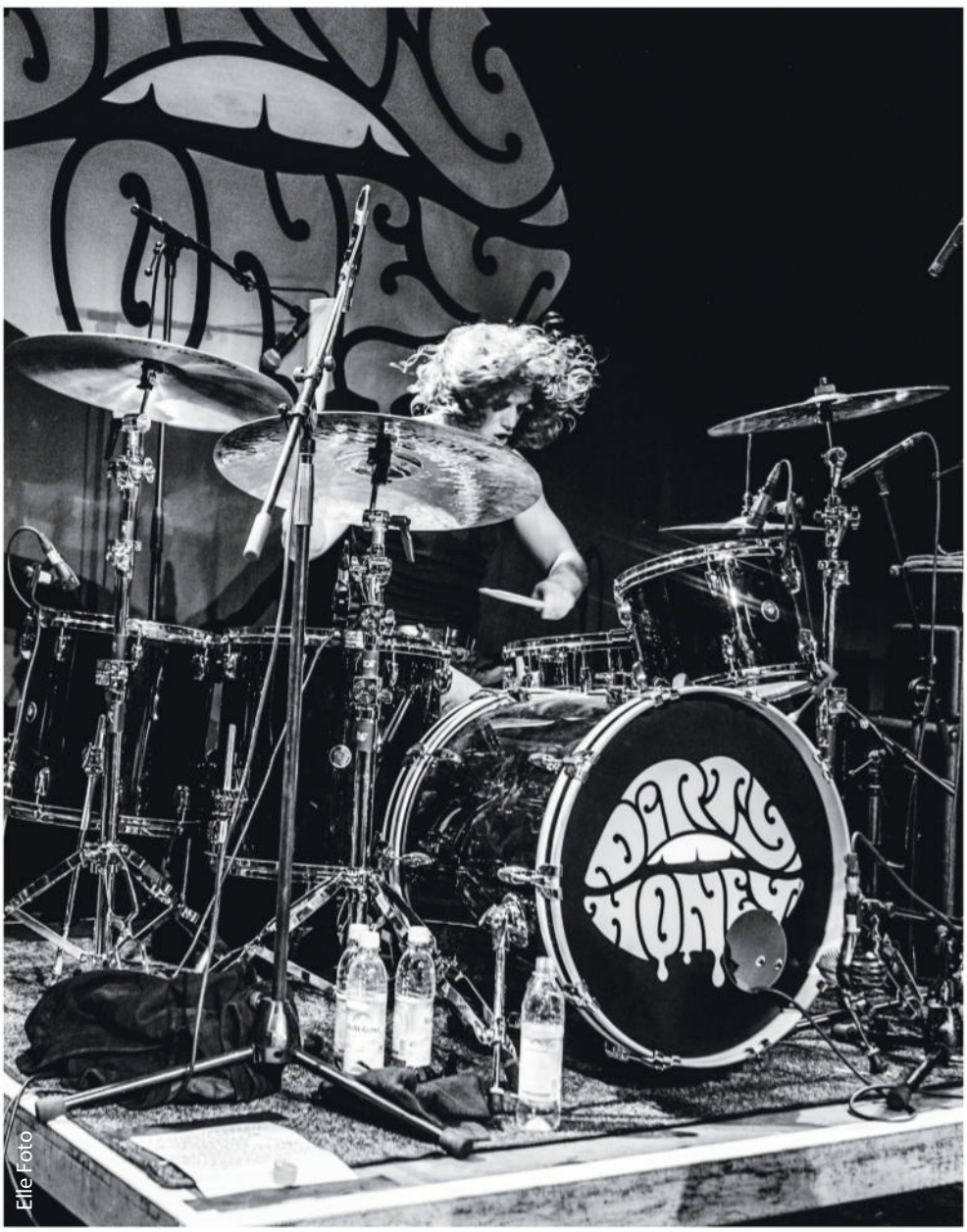
MD: Define a "good practicer?"
JB: The first element of a "good practicer" is time, not timekeeping (as in keeping good time,) but the actual amount of time you put in. Developing a good practice routine is something that most people don't know how to do. A lot of guys don't like to sound bad when they practice because they come out feeling down. But if you sound bad when you're practicing, it's because you're practicing *the right stuff.* I was always a big supporter of practicing slow *and* practicing fast. I think it was Carl Allen that told me, "If you want to learn how to play fast, just play fast." There's a whole double-edged sword of practicing slow, if you never speed things up, you're never going to get faster, but if you don't practice slow you won't sound clean when you play fast!

I went through a lot of books and did what I call triplet grid exercises. That is when you're using triplet variations and practicing independence with certain limbs over ostinatos in various styles. We do that in jazz, it's when you play a swinging pattern and you're comping and sight-reading rhythms with your left hand, right foot, and left foot. But you can do the same thing with a with a Latin 6/8 bembe pattern or anything else. I go through the triplet grid of playing a pattern while playing all the variations to find wherever my weaknesses are. Then I pick it apart, drill it slow, and keep playing that combination in different ways.

I think the most important part of this process is when you get comfortable and you actually practice randomizing it, or

what some people would call "doing it on the fly." For instance, if I want to get good at a specific hand foot sixteenth note combination, you practice kick kick snare snare, slow and fast until you get to where it's almost second nature. Then I'll do a triplet version, snare snare kick, snare snare kick, and all the different combinations that we all do. After I've gotten to the point where I'm pretty comfortable, I like to let my mind go and let my body just kind of throw it out there and get the feel of it. After you've practiced things enough times, you need to let "will" take over. When somebody asked Buddy Rich how he played all those things, he said, "I just will my body to do it." The last thing I do when I'm practicing a new idea is that "practice of will." I throw everything out and just hear it in my head and let it come out. Even if it sounds awful at first, eventually you just gotta just start playing it. It's all about the mechanics of taking ideas from the drilling and exercise phase to letting those exercises all flow together in the music. A lot of guys *think* when they play, but you should be *feeling* when you play. We're trying to exercise *feeling* rather than *thinking*. When you play you want to let things come out, you relax into the song, you're listening. You hear the bass player do something and you react based off all the things that you've drilled and practiced. I want things to be organic, fun, and "on the fly." I love music and drumming that is filled with fire and energy. But that doesn't come out unless you let things happen in the moment and turn your brain off.

I really love those Randy Waldman records that Vinnie Colaiuta did. When you look at the transcriptions in the *Unreel* book that Marc Atkinson wrote, there's groups of quintuplets and septuplets and whatever. As a kid I wondered how Vinnie was thinking about all of that. But when I got a little older, I realized he's not thinking about it, he's just playing it. Marc transcribed it and figured out that what he played, but in the moment, Vinnie's just feeling that stuff. I think that's what sets the high-level players apart from everyone else. Even in the professional world, there's a vast number of players that can't do what I call "tapping into infinity." It's like opening the frequency bandwidth to allow for everything and whatever you know to come out at the exact right moment. But if you're thinking, you're closing yourself off to all of that.



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MD: What type of things did you study with Alex Acuna?

JB: Alex is the coolest teacher on the planet. Our lessons would be two or three hours long. Half of that would be talking about him growing up in the Latin music scene; how they sing, how they talk, and how they dance. He would tie it all together.

Then we would jam together, and he'd stop and say, "Here's an exercise you should practice, and he'd run through something really quick. I remember thinking, "It's a good thing I'm recording all of this." Alex is a whirlwind of information. We talked about everything from playing percussion instruments and translating that to the kit to different coordination exercises. He would explain what the bongos were doing in a specific type of groove, and how to implement that on the kit when there's no bongo player. We worked on a lot of different sticking patterns over bossa nova's and different cascaras. He talked a lot about feel, playing with intent, and playing with meaning! He really feels strongly about

that. Alex is a fiery player, but when he gets on the kit, there's never anything extra, it all has meaning, that had a huge impact on me, making sure I played with intent. That's another one of those things that sets apart a real pro from anyone else, there's a serious intent from their playing that is unmistakable, and it's always there.

Latin music is all ears. It's a language that you learn. The bongo player might play a call that means something, so everyone's going to latch onto that, and respond to that cue by going to the next section. But you need to listen to who is queuing the sections. Sometimes it's the vocalist, sometimes it's the timbale player, sometimes it's the cowbell player, whoever… When Alex and I would jam it was "feel" based jamming. He had me start listening to (the band) Los Munequitos de Matanzas and listening to the feel of different styles while understanding how I was playing them wrong. I learned about how sixteenth notes that are being played by a Cuban drummer are different from how a Brazilian drummer, or an American drummer plays sixteenth notes. Everybody is playing sixteenth notes, but we all play them differently. Alex would talk about how rhythms and music are supposed to feel. That really opened my ears. That's something that's also in jazz music. When you play, you're supposed to be playing WITH everyone else. That's one thing that a lot of drummers (kind of) forget— drummers think, "I'm the timekeeper, I'm keeping the beat, everyone should play to me!" That's cool, but something weird happens when we think like that, and everyone starts to sound like they're not playing together.

MD: Everyone is playing at the same time, but not playing together.

JB: That's it! It happens at the high professional level and the intermediate-mediocre levels as well. Music is based on your ears. The time can move, but it must move together. Time is a fluid thing. Don't get me wrong, obviously I'm a drummer so I don't want the music to slow down and speed up. In Dirty Honey, we're raw dogging it, we throw down. I count it off and we go for it, no click, no nothing, this is rock'n'roll! The new record *Can't Find the Brakes* is 90% no click too! Playing with a band is not about having good time with the click, anyone can sit there and play with the click, it's about feeling the music and being able to adjust within the music. Maybe the bass player is pulling back a little, you don't want to be the guy that keeps drilling forward. That will make the bassist sound like he's way back in the in the woods, hanging out by himself. You want to make it feel good. If he's going one way a little bit, you stay in the same spot with him, that's cool because you're all moving together. If one person moves and no one else moves with them, then you've got problems. Obviously different sections of music will pull back a little bit, you might slap the pre-chorus on the backside of the beat and come back sreaight onto the beat at the chorus to lift it just a little bit. Those are things like that that people need to understand, but they never get there because people are in their own "click in-ear monitor world."

I think a lot of drummers are scared of that because there's always a click or beat-detective with the music nowadays. There is this sense that you must be a machine with your playing. But when people go see live music and they feel a band speeding up a tiny bit, the energy lifts and the audience and the band become this united thing that's moving together. The audience can feel the band, and everyone's gets excited. It's fine when a band can sound tight, but it takes a lot more to make an audience really feel something.

MD: So how did moving to LA, working around town, and the studying you did, lead to Dirty Honey?

JB: There's history with me and this band. I lived with John Notto and Justin Smolian (guitarist and bass player from Dirty Honey) for two and a half years. During that time, we were writing a lot of music, and at that time we were called The Shaggs. We had written and recorded some demos, and we were playing around town. Then I got a touring gig with an alternative electronic band called Missio. So I went on tour with Missio and I was just gone too much. John and Justin found Corey, who is an amazing drummer, I've known him for 12 or 13 years. He did the first Dirty Honey EP and the first record, but Corey decided to leave the band, and Justin called me. Coincidentally, Missio's touring schedule had slowed down, so Justin calling me to play with Dirty Honey made perfect sense, we hit the road and we recorded (the new record) *Can't Find the Brakes*.

MD: Since you were a young drummer who moved to LA to become a professional musician, and a lot of young musicians still dream of that, talk to them about making that move.

JB: The very first thing I would say is this. If you're gonna move to a city like LA, you must be *very* serious about what you want to do. I don't think it's ever worth it to just "*give something a try.*" If you have the idea that you're gonna go to LA and "just give it a try for a little bit," then you should just stay home. The guys that stick it out and keep working their way up are the ones that do well. When I first moved out here, I didn't know anyone and I didn't have any school ties, that made it tough.

The second thing I would say is this. It would benefit you to have some sort of a social circle out here that you can latch onto when you come out. If you don't have that, you better be willing to be very social, this is an extroverted industry, and that's unfortunate for people that are introverted. You must make friends, be out there supporting other musicians, and build your network. However, you can be creative with the way that you do that. I used to hold gigantic barbecues in in the backyard of the house that I was living, I would invite everyone that I met and tell them to invite all their friends and we'd have

I LOVE MUSIC AND DRUMMING THAT IS FILLED WITH FIRE AND ENERGY. BUT THAT DOESN'T COME OUT UNLESS YOU LET THINGS HAPPEN IN THE MOMENT AND TURN YOUR BRAIN OFF.

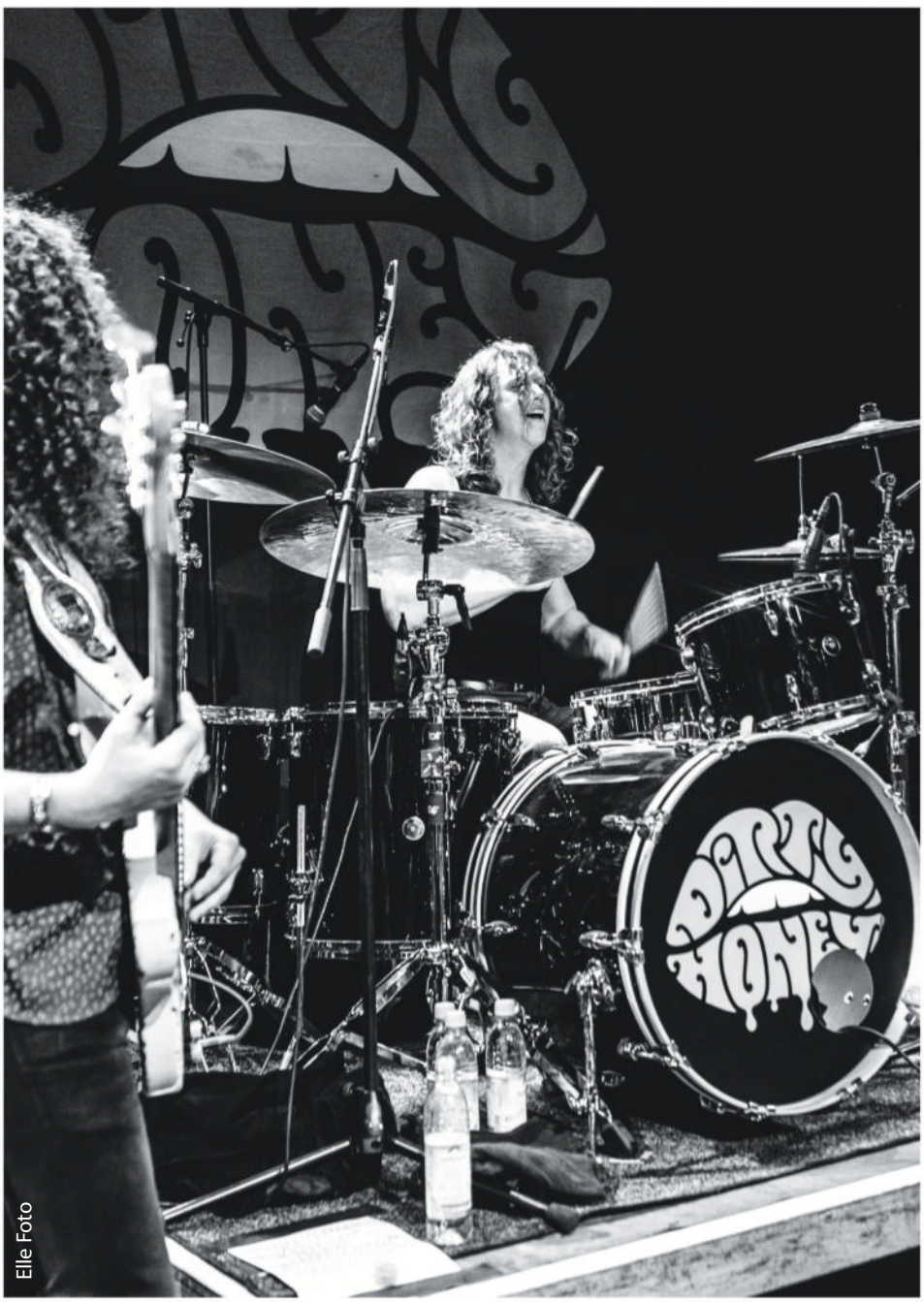
these little musician mixers. I'd put up all the money myself just to get this circle of friends and musicians together to build my network. I wasn't the type to hang at bars a lot, although I did do that because that's where you meet people and invite them to your barbeques.

In the beginning, I took every audition and every crappy gig (within reason,) I did have standards. It's not easy. You see people on Instagram and think they are making it out here, well they're not! It's much harder than it looks on Instagram to really make a living as a musician living in LA. It's expensive, LA is a big city, you're driving a lot, it takes a lot of work (and time) to get to the point where you're *just comfortable*. But when you do, it's worth it, because LA is one of the top music cities in the world. If you can really play, eventuality people will know who you are, people will call you for gigs, and people will respect you as a musician. But everyone should know it's not easy and you gotta be serious!

MD: You said it takes a lot of time to become "comfortable." Honestly, how long did it take you to become "comfortable" in LA?

JB: 15 years, and it's an ongoing battle, especially now. Now everybody is searching for the money. In the heyday of the 80s and 90s people were making real money. Back then, touring, playing on records, and playing gigs around town made money. Nowadays the money for gigs is not great, the money for records is not great, and the availability of work is diminishing. Not to mention that the wages have not gone up in 20 years.

Younger musicians are willing to do gigs for dirt cheap or even for free. Another thing I that would say to young musicians coming up is to *please stop doing that*. Respect yourself, respect your capabilities, respect the time that you have put in, and respect your fellow musicians. If you've been playing for eight or ten years that's as long as a doctor has gone to school. Demand a little more compensation for your talent and skills, and let's get everyone making reasonable wages that are livable and comfortable again.



Elle Foto

Today you have major pop stars who are paying their band's peanuts because there are musicians that don't respect the fact that they have talent, and they should get a serious wage for the amount of work that is required for touring. It's a shame that musicians are happy to undercut another musician for a tour, that's why the wages keep going down. There are bands headlining the main stages of major festivals making peanuts, it's just wrong. We're in a tricky spot in the music industry right now, it must change.

MD: I have seen that happen everywhere, it's a downward spiral, and when it reaches the bottom, everyone winds up "just" playing music for free, and that is unsustainable. The music, musicians, and music lovers ALL suffer in that scenario.

JB: There are some buddies of mine in LA and in different cities, that have music collectives. The collective has a music director that will assist a band and the company has set rates that are agreeable to everyone who is a part of the collective. Hopefully that can become a norm.

MD: What are some of your favorite tracks from the *Can't Find the Brakes*?
JB: "Don't Put Out the Fire" is a banger. That's all about the groove, it's literally just boom bap, but every time we play that live, within three seconds the crowd immediately starts moving. We've played it all summer in Europe on the summer tours and the festivals as well as the shows with Guns 'N Roses, and the response was amazing! The song "Can't Find the Brakes" has got so much fire and energy, and at the end I get a little section to do two nice drummer shreddy fills. "Won't Take Me Alive" is the first single and that's a serious rock song. But it's very funky, I'm playing open hi-hats on the downbeats on the verse. I get to bring in my funk background on that one. I really like the ballad "Coming Home" and I'm hardly doing anything on it, I love it because it's just a great song. That was a funny one to record because we didn't know what to do with it. I tracked so many different things, I tried playing brushes on cajon, playing on a suitcase, just trying different sounds— it's very subtle and nuanced. I took it to the limit and then I pulled it back to what it needed. It was fun to figure out what my place in that song. We ended up keeping very minimal amounts of what I tried. But it wound up being really cool, I'm doing some brush pattern stuff between the floor tom and the snare and a little bit of shaker. I get to show my "sensitive" side.
MD: You get a great drum sound on the new record, what was the process?
JB: Producer Nick DiDia used A LOT of drum mics on this record. There were four room mics, we had a cool overhead behind me, along with a traditional XY overhead pattern. We had top and bottom tom mics, inside kick and outside kick, snare top and bottom, a shotgun mic that was pointed right at the snare from outside the kit. Then Nick did all his little different mix tricks. I tracked the new record with a vintage Slingerland set that was 22, 13, 16, and a 6.5 Supraphonic, that kit had a lot of vibe.

We spent a month writing and tracking the record at Nick's beautiful studio in Australia, and recorded about 20 songs, and 11 made it to the record. We recorded everything live with scratch vocals. Then Marc and John went back and do vocals and guitar solos. I wrote all the background harmony parts and then we went back added them in post-production. It was very old-school.
MD: Are you singing any of the harmony parts?
JB: Yes, I do most of the harmony parts live, but Marc sang most of them on the record. I was a singer before I was a drummer, I come from a weird musical family. We all performed, I was a singer-dancer beginning at age three, I started singing and dancing with my sisters. We performed on TV doing different shows and competitions, then I got my first drum kit at nine.

MD: What type of dance did you study?
JB: I did everything, jazz tap, hip hop, ballet, break dancing… I was spinning on my head when I was 12 years old. My whole singing background is singing harmonies. I was always harmonizing with my sisters. My youngest sister would usually sing the melody and my other sister, and I would sing harmonies. Singing harmony is a second nature for me, I almost hear harmony before I hear a melody. When it came to writing harmonies for the record and singing them live, it's nothing for me. The only thing that gets weird is when I'm playing complicated fills or triplet grooves. That can be weird for me with singing, but other than that it's pretty easy.
MD: How has singing influenced your drumming?
JB: I listen to the vocalist a lot when I play, that's one thing that a lot of drummers don't do, and I know that for a fact. Every vocalist I play with notices that I am very aware of what they're doing. If tempos need to change because the vocalist is having trouble getting out the lyrics, I'm gonna do it. I am gonna do it over 16 or 32 bars to make it sound natural, but there *will* be some changes made. If I hear that the vocalist is not getting enough space, squashing words, or they're just not able to get the pitches because we're not giving them enough space to get the note and the air, I'll adjust. If I'm singing harmonies, I always know that if I'm running out of breath, they're running out of breath.
MD: Who were and are some of your favorite drummers and bands?
JB: Boston, Styx, Doobie Brothers, I call them the "hits era" of classic rock because they are very vocal and harmony driven. That was a big part of my upbringing. I love John Hartman of the Doobies, and AC DC's Phil Rudd. I didn't get into the drum virtuosos until I was in high school. Obviously, John Bonham was huge influence as was James Brown and all his drummers. I came up in the N' Sync and Backstreet Boys boy band era, and even though most of those grooves are mostly programmed, no matter what your opinion is of the songs, those grooves are FIRE! Jazz music and drummers didn't come until high school. As I got older it was more jazz like Buddy Rich, Jeff Hamilton, and Bill Stewart, and more virtuosos like Gadd, Vinnie, and Weckl. Bill Stewart has some amazing polyrhythmic capabilities, and he somehow musically fits them into not only his solos, but parts of the music. He plays 3 over 4 and 5 over 4 within a song, that always amazes me. I've transcribed a lot of Bill Stewart. Jeff Hamilton is one of the most musical jazz drummers ever, he has a great time and a great feel. Eventually, I discovered Gary Novak and Mark Guiliana. But when I was in college, all I listened to was Adam Deitch. Now I'm getting back to listening to the early guys that I listened to when I was a kid, guys that were musical, guys like Josh Freese.

BUT WHEN PEOPLE GO SEE LIVE MUSIC AND THEY FEEL A BAND SPEEDING UP A TINY BIT, THE ENERGY LIFTS AND THE AUDIENCE AND THE BAND BECOME THIS UNITED THING THAT'S MOVING TOGETHER.

Because the virtuoso thing is so overdone now, in 10 minutes on Instagram you'll hear 20 drummers that sound like Vinnie or Weckl and have never played in a band. That's so boring.

I love John Hartman's playing with the Doobies. If you listen to the song "Jesus is Just Alright" it's got everything— a great groove and a tempo and a time signature change in the middle of it. It goes into a 12/8 thing in the bridge and then the drummer kicks it back to the groove with four big snare notes. I love the slow fat grooves of Rage Against the Machine, Jeff Porcaro is at the top of everyone's drummer list, not everyone likes Toto, but I LOVE them, and it's because of the drumming. Todd Sucherman is also one of my favorite rock drummers, I saw him when I was 16, and he blew my mind.

When I was in High School, I met a local drummer named Bill Nicholls who really helped me out. His knowledge of jazz was amazing, and he had 10 vintage drum sets. My High School band teacher introduced me to him, and I learned that he lived right down the street from me. He had all these old jazz records that didn't have drums on them— and he had me play along with those records— that was a great way to learn. We watched tons of old Buddy Rich videos and interviews. Actually, Bill gave me some of my first drums. He gave me a 1966 Ludwig Acrolite that I still play constantly, it's probably my favorite snare drum ever, it sounds so good. You can tell the difference between the 70s and the 60s Acrolites. The 60s have a thinner shell and sound so much better.

MD: What kind of gear are you playing in Dirty Honey?

JB: I have been playing Gretsch for years, and I just got a new USA Custom set. I use a 16x22 kick, 12" or a 13" rack tom, and I have 14" and 16" floor toms. But I flip them around and play the 16" as my main floor tom. In my entire life, I've actually only ever bought and owned Gretsch drum sets. To me, the sound of Gretsch drums is the way that drums should sound. They have grit, a warm tone, and a wonderful attack.

I play mostly Gretsch snares, I have a 6.5 Hand Hammered Brass, a Brooklyn COB, and some Renown's; but I have an arsenal of snares: Ludwig Black Beauty, Acrolite, I have a custom solid Walnut made by Kelly drums. But in reality, you only need four snare drums to cover all of the bases.

I am an Istanbul Mehmet Cymbal artist, I use a Traditional 22" ride, 18", 19", or 20" crashes, and Traditional hats. I also have a 16" Hammer that was used a lot on the record. I have an X-ray Random 16" which is actually a hi-hat, but I use it as a crash. Nick (the producer) gave me an old thin set of 60s Zildjian A's to use on the on the record.

MD: I have to thank Dirty Honey for keeping the rock 'n roll flame alive. It's been a pleasure to talk to a young, well-rounded, well-schooled drummer who can really play. You guys are really playing your asses off and writing some great music.

JB: Being interviewed by *Modern Drummer* is a dream come true! Thank you!

Check out Jaydon's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

David Havlena

Michal Miskiewicz

Playing ECM's Air with Feeling

By Mark Griffith

Jazz is a truly American artform, as is jazz drumming. However, that doesn't mean that this important resource hasn't been exported to the rest of the world. Poland was an importer of American jazz in the 1950s and 60s. But Communist Russia attempted to outlaw and suppress jazz in Poland. Since Poland broke free of Russia, Poland has slowly blossomed into a proud contributor to the universal tradition of jazz.

Today the trio of Polish pianist Marcin Wasilewski, bassist Slawomir Kurkiewicz, and drummer Michal Miskiewicz, is celebrating 30 years together, they have released many recordings both independently and on ECM, and after years of touring they just made their first appearance at New York's Village Vanguard accompanying saxophonist Joe Lovano.

Michal Miskiewicz is a wonderfully talented jazz drummer, he is steeped in the ECM tradition of European jazz, and he is knowledgeable about Poland's jazz tradition. However, his earliest and biggest inspirations come from American jazz drummers. He has melded all of this into a drumming approach that is unique, beautiful, filled with feeling and emotion, and very creative.

Szymon Ratajczyk

MD: How did you start playing drums?
MM: That's a complex answer. From the very beginning I was into drums, I was very interested in rhythm and music in general, but especially in rhythm. My father (Henryk Miskiewicz) is an alto saxophone player who is very well known to Polish people, he is a great player and composer, so I had music in my home throughout my life. When I was two or three years old, I was banging on everything, I was curious about rhythm. I am told that I was playing along with big band recordings and trying to play the swing pattern at a young age. Of course, I don't remember this because I was so young. Drums have been in my mind for whole my life. In primary school, I studied piano, but I didn't like it very much, I didn't like to practice for long periods of time. Around grade six, I decided to be drummer, I started to learn classical music and study snare drum, xylophone, and timpani. In high school the fascination of jazz came again, and around 13 I started to play drum set. I was teaching myself through watching drummers doing what they do. I started listening to a lot of jazz records and just trying to play like the best drummers I heard. At 16, I actually played my first gig, and that was the beginning of becoming a professional drummer.

I spent entire afternoons listening to one record over and over, that was a very important beginning. I was listening to Coltrane, Keith Jarrett Trio, Miles Davis, Bobo Stenson Trio, Freddie Hubbard, Wynton and Branford Marsalis, whatever…

MD: What jazz music and drummers did you hear at that age to make you become interested in jazz drumming?
MM: I had a video cassette with a great concert of Herbie Hancock with Michael Brecker, Buster Williams, and Al Foster. Al Foster was my first drumming hero, I hold his playing deep in my heart. Al has an amazing and swinging beat on the ride cymbal, that fascinated me, and it still does. The sound of his ride cymbal was very unique as well.
MD: When I first moved to New York, Al really took me under his wing, and helped me a lot. He is a very special man.
MM: I got to meet him later, I actually loaned him a set for a tour of Poland about 20 years ago. It was my father who first told me first to listen to Al. He told me to listen to his time on the ride cymbal. The feeling of Al playing very simple rhythms was amazing. His drumming is just so full of feeling. He often plays in a kind of circle around the beat, he creates an amazing groove and swing while not playing very complex rhythms. It is all about the expression and emotion that he conveys from the drums. I watched that videotape hundreds of times. Many years later I found another concert from that same week of just Herbie, Buster, and Al playing trio. I actually got to see him live for the first time in 1992 with Joe Henderson.
MD: Who did you start to listen to after Al?
MM: Listening to Tony Williams with Miles came quite soon, then Jack DeJohnette, Billy Higgins, Elvin Jones of course. My imagination was further blown when I saw what Brian Blade was doing with Wayne Shorter.
MD: When you started playing drum set, what were you studying?
MM: At the age of 15 and 16 I was listening to music constantly. I spent entire afternoons listening to one record over and over, that was a very important beginning. I was listening to Coltrane, Keith Jarrett Trio, Miles Davis, Bobo Stenson Trio, Freddie Hubbard, Wynton and Branford Marsalis, whatever… But I wasn't transcribing and writing things down, I was trying to follow the expressions of the drummers. For instance, I was trying to play like Jack DeJohnette, but not *exactly*, I was trying to copy the *feeling* of his drumming from memory. I would hear him play his own things on records, but it was more fascinating for me to try NOT to play exactly the same ideas, but to play his expression and feelings on the drums. I started playing some similar things, maybe I should have written some of that stuff down, but I didn't. In those times I was going crazy, I was a young guy and trying to copy all of my heroes.
MD: So it was all ears, ears, ears.
MM: Yes, but I was not only listening to drummers, I was listening to ALL the musicians on the recordings, the really important thing is the collaboration between musicians, how they react to each other, that's what's really important. Then (trumpeter and Polish jazz legend) Tomasz Stanko called me for a tour, I was very lucky.
MD: Was that your first tour?
MM: No, actually a famous Polish jazz saxophonist named Jan "Ptaszyn" Wroblewski hired our trio (pianist Marcin Wasilewski, bassist Slawomir Kurkiewicz, and me) first. That gig was actually my first professional one. We were originally called Simple Acoustic Trio, and few months after the concert with Ptaszyn, Tomasz Stanko called us in December 1993.
MD: So how did the Trio first come together?
MM: We played together in the jazz workshops in a small town near Warsaw. Slawomir and Marcin are from northern Poland, and they had already a band with another drummer, but I knew that I wanted to play with them. They listened to me play, and at first Slawomir didn't like me much, but Marcin did. But the first time we played together it was a perfect match, it was really something. Word spread about our young jazz trio, and Tomasz was looking for a band, he called me, and I suggested our trio. And here we are 30 years later, and the trio is still together, sounding better than ever.
MD: The trio has recorded a lot. You did several recordings as the Simple Acoustic Trio, including the amazing record *Komeda*. Then you started recording for ECM, and have done five ECM

trio releases, as well as some recordings where the trio is playing with the guests such as Joakim Milder and Joe Lovano. The trio has also recorded backing Jacob Young and Tomasz Stańko. Did Tomasz ever tell you why he wanted the trio to be his working band, he is a true jazz legend.

MM: He thought the trio had a good sense of swing, and he loved that. In the past he had mostly played free and in a more avant-garde approach. But he always wanted to play in a more mainstream way. Because we grew up playing in more of a mainstream jazz approach, he liked us very much. He also liked that the band played together as one singular sound, we already had a good sense of playing together, and he wanted to add his trumpet to that. It's amazing, but after 30 years together, this still feels like the beginning, and we like that.

MD: How would you describe the trio's music (and concept) to someone who hasn't heard you yet?

MM: We always play what we feel, we combine many things. The things we do can be very abstract, we like to play freely, but we have also played Police songs, Prince songs, Bjork compositions, and even a song by The Doors. Whether it is drums, bass, or piano, we are all very aware of having a nice touch on our instruments and we play with a clear articulation. Marcin has a unique and recognizable touch on the piano and touch is a very important thing for us. We like to use many dynamics, quite often we will change colors and character within a single song. We never play a whole concert with the same feeling. Some compositions will be soft, some will be heavy, sometimes we will improvise freely, and sometimes we just play straight ahead swing. We like to let the music flow with different emotions, to surprise ourselves, and surprise the audience.

MD: Stylistically, who has influenced the trio's approach?

MM: Obviously, Bill Evans' trio, the Keith Jarrett trio, the Bobo Stenson trio with Jon Christensen, I also like Tony Oxley's drumming a lot. I also like Charles Ives, he was composing amazingly modern music in the 1920s. His broken type of rhythms and harmonies are an inspiration for me to play free. I love Ives'"4th Symphony." I am very inspired by Robert Glasper's music with Chris Dave, whose beats are fascinating.

MD: After seeing you with Joe Lovano at the Village Vanguard, I wanted to ask you about playing with someone like Joe, who has played with so many of the all-time greats in drumming (Elvin Jones, Mel Lewis, Jack DeJohnette, Al Foster, Paul Motian, Ed Blackwell, Aldo Romano…) Are you aware and thinking about all of the music that Joe has played with the legends of jazz drumming?

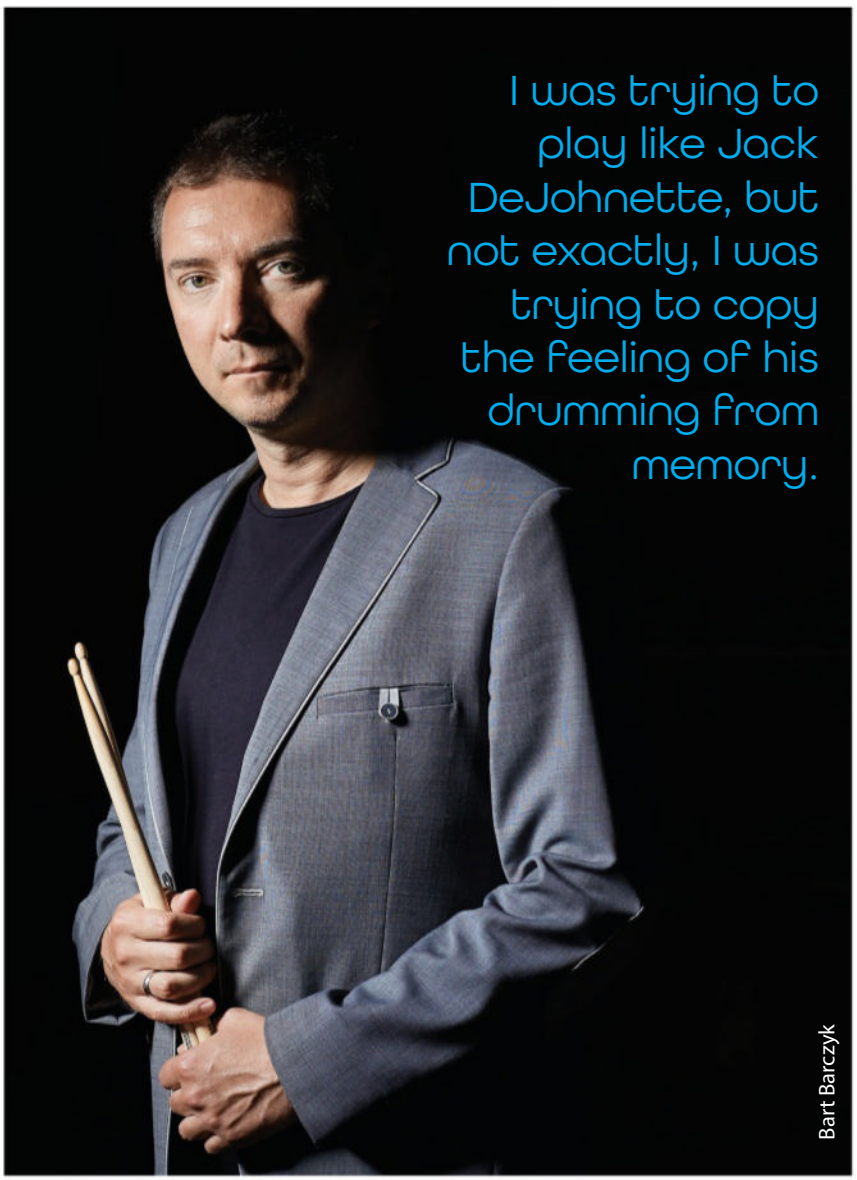
MM: I'm glad you mentioned Aldo Romano, I admire his drumming! But I try not to think about that too much because I could go crazy. Maybe it's a good thing that I don't know about every drummer that Joe has played with, because (as you said) he's played with so many great drummers, and great young drummers too, like Bill Stewart and Joey Baron. I actually did my final paper (thesis) in university on Paul Motian, and I spent a lot of time analyzing the records that Joe did in the trio with Motian and Bill Frisell.

MD: What type of insight can you give us from your study of Paul Motian?

MM: I did that 25 years ago, so it doesn't represent the last part of his career. But his touch was magnificent, and his approach to playing free is like no other. He has the unique ability to play freely while keeping the pulse, it's a beautiful thing. I have spent time trying to recreate that, I am fascinated by playing an abstract walking type of groove and tempo on the drums, while the group is playing rubato.

MD: Playing a tempo in time, while the band is playing rubato without a specific tempo?

MM: Yes. If a tune doesn't have a tempo, you can (for instance) play an abstract walking groove which fits the rubato piece and what the rest of the band is doing. I heard Motian do that a lot. Then suddenly he does something completely different, and



you don't know why. Then he'll play an unpredictable accent between the ride cymbal and the bass drum and things will change again. His snare drum sound and playing was very unique. Because he had a little bit of a marching feel, I think he had roots playing and marching in the military. You can really hear his life experience in his drumming, that's what I also want to do, but it happens unconsciously. We all play our life experiences; we tell our own stories on drums. Your pain and your happiness should come out in your drumming.

MD: WE are the instrument and we're really playing ourselves.

MM: I love how Paul Motian played in his Electric Bebop band, and his older record *Conception Vessel* is one of my favorites. The second tune on Keith Jarrett's *Survivor's Suite* is amazing. I loved the record that he made in 2009 with Enrico Rava and Mark Turner called *New York Days*. And (of course) the *Live at the Village Vanguard* record with Bill Evans is perfect.

MD: You are becoming quite the "ECM drummer," and no one created that style more than Jon Christensen. What can you tell us about Jon's drumming?

MM: There was no predictability in Jon. He had amazing musical intuition. I heard that at the end of his life he had it written into his contract that he didn't want to play any rhythm, any pulse, or any tempos. I'm not sure is it true but I found that interesting. The magic about his drumming was that even if he played rubato, he could somehow fit whatever was going on around him musically into his rubato drumming.

MD: What are some of your favorite Jon Christensen recordings?

MM: The recordings with Keith Jarret and Jan Garbarek, *My Song, Belonging, Nude Ants* is live from the Village Vanguard and on the amazing last piece, Jon grooves like hell. Another great one is Charles Lloyd's *Fish Out of Water.* At the end of the tune called "Eyes of Love", Jon starts to go out of time, but he's still in the groove with the bass solo. He's also playing amazing things during Charles Lloyd's solo. He's using his own structures but fitting them in perfectly.

MD: You mentioned Tony Oxley, what would you tell people about him?

MM: He was in Tomasz's quartet when we started to play with Tomasz. Tony was so good, just a great free player, I think he created his own instrumental approach, there are many sounds and colors that you hear immediately. Once in a concert, Tony was not playing time at all for the entire night, but then suddenly he broke into playing time and the release was amazing. His duet playing with Cecil Taylor is simply amazing.

MD: Tension and release, that what music is about. You have mentioned several different musical and drumming ingredients: Al Foster, Jon Christensen, Aldo Romano, Paul Motian, Charles Ives, and Tony Oxley. How did all of those come together to

Robert Wierzbicki

create your unique drumming approach?
MM: That is a fascinating question. When you have more combinations of influences then you have more possibilities on your instrument. You have many ways to tell more stories. If I listened to only Papa Jo Jones, then I'd probably start and stay in that style. I want to have more in my mind that just one approach, I mentioned classical music because it helps create different combinations in my mind. I also have to say that as I get older (I'm 46 now) I'm looking for more and more ways within myself to play, I am looking for new ways to inspire myself and look for new ways to feel music and play the drums. You don't always have to look outward for inspiration, you can also look inward, inside of yourself.
MD: How are you doing that?
MM: I just sit down and play. I follow my intuition and just improvise, when you do it every day, you get better and better. I need to stay relaxed and feel good when I am doing this. When you are relaxed and concentrating, the best things happen. That is true with music and everything.
MD: When you sit an improvise are you playing in time or free?
MM: Both, I combine them. I play some rubato and let it flow into walking time and back to rubato. I have also been practicing a lot of odd-time and polyrhythmic things. In jazz, and in our trio, we are playing more and more that kind of music. We have some stuff in 7/8, 11/8, and 13/8 so I need to be able to do that comfortably and fluidly.
MD: When you are practicing like that are you thinking about song forms or structure?
MM: No, I'm just playing rhythms in that meter. However, if I am preparing for someone's recording session, I will learn those songs and improvise on them.
MD: How do you learn people's music?
MM: People will give me their written music, and I will memorize it. I have found that I can learn music pretty quickly, because when I play or record it, I don't want to be looking at the music, I try to have the songs memorized.
MD: The trio with Marcin and Slawomir has been together for 30 years, how has the trio's approach evolved in those 30 years?
MM: In the beginning, we were more straight-ahead players, we were listening to a lot of American jazz recordings, so we played more in that way. A very important moment in the trio's development was when we met ECM's Manfred Eicher in 2001, that's when Tomasz Stanko brought us in for his *Soul of Things* recording. The trio was already playing together for seven years or eight years, but the ECM approach changed us a little bit. In fact, no, it wasn't a little bit, ECM and Manfred had a huge impact on us. When you record in such a big spacious studio such as Rainbow Studio in Oslo, Norway or Auditorio Radiotelevisione svizzera in Lugano, Switzerland the music can be more spacious, you can give lots of breadth to the music. You learn that you can play a thousand times fewer notes and the music will be stronger.
MD: As musicians we all *know* this, but it is a different thing to know it, and to really *experience* that aesthetic in the creation of music.
MM: When we first met Manfred (the creative force behind ECM Records) on the *Soul of Things* recording sessions it was fantastic. Then we started to record for ECM as a trio. We were honored and we still are. The sound of ECM had a fascinating effect on how we played, and it began to change the way we played in concert as well. We became inspired to play less, be more calm, and to concentrate more on the details. We were thinking (in a good way) about playing less notes but making sure they were the "right" notes. We weren't pushing as much, and we were keeping our emotions calmer. That made the trio much stronger.

> If a tune doesn't have a tempo, you can (for instance) play an abstract walking groove which fits the rubato piece and what the rest of the band is doing. I heard Motian do that a lot.

MD: Can you describe a little bit more, about how those rooms affect the way that you play, and how the room becomes part of the recording?
MM: The room should *always* influence how you play. You should always play for the room, whether it is a live concert or a recording studio. To create the best sound, you must hear the room. There are certain rooms where you can't play loudly because the room is hard and can even create pain for the ears of the audience. Playing acoustic in a club that is very dry, you can play stronger, and it might sound better. So much depends on matching a band with a room, it's fascinating.
MD: Speaking of clubs, you just played the Village Vanguard in New York City with Joe Lovano, with whom you recorded *Arctic Riff*. That is a legendary room, how did you enjoy playing The Vanguard?
MM: Yes, that was my first time playing The Vanguard. The Vanguard is a fantastic room to play, it's a real jazz club. The sound is not too dry, and not too reverberant. It's a perfect club to play and we were honored to be there. I could play many different things there, I could use many dynamics and play very soft, and when I played louder the expression was not lost. When I played more expressively, emotionally, and louder it was not so loud that it became hard for the audience to feel and appreciate.
MD: How does the trio change when you introduce a horn player like Joe Lovano or Tomasz Stanko?
MM: The trumpet or the saxophone brings a different sound out of me, I think I play more expressively. In the trio maybe I am more subdued, it's a subtle thing. The saxophone is a stronger sound and that allows me to do more with the dynamics. It's all about the dynamics. Joe Lovano likes me to be wild and strong in the rhythm while being free and open. Tomasz was a very free guy, he loved when we were doing crazy things under his solos.
MD: When you and the trio played behind Tomasz, it had a real late Miles Davis Quintet type of approach. Was that ever discussed?
MM: Tomasz Stanko loved all the music that Miles made. From what I have learned about Miles, Tomasz's approach as a bandleader was kind of similar. Tomasz didn't talk to us much;

it was always about playing what you feel. That was the kind of artist and bandleader he was. We felt very free to do what we do. He assumed that if we didn't talk about how we should play, we would do it better, that was the best solution to him.

MD: What recordings with the trio, and also playing behind other musicians, do you feel best represent your drumming?

MM: We recorded three records before we started recording for ECM, but I personally prefer the music that we have recorded with ECM. I like the first one, just called *Trio*, the second record called *January* is very good. There are some fantastic moments on *Arctic Riff* (with Joe Lovano) and *Spark of Life* (with Joakim Milder.) I like my drumming on the trio *Live* recording. Tomasz Stanko's *Soul Of Things* is one of my favorite records that I have done. *Lontano* as well, because we're using different colors. I also like the second and fourth tracks from the album with my father and sister called *Nasza Miłość*.

> Once in a concert, Tony Oxley was not playing time at all for the entire night, but then suddenly he broke into playing time and the release was amazing

MD: The trio also plays music written by Hermeto Pascoal, Wayne Shorter, Carla Bley, and Herbie Hancock. Which tunes do you like playing the most?

MM: I really like all of them, and Marcin's tunes as well. For example I like "The Cat," and "The First Touch" from the *January* album. I like many of our free improvisations. On *En Attendant*, I enjoyed playing The Doors "Riders on the Storm." I liked all of *The Spark of Life* record, and the Tomasz Stanko record *The Soul of Things*. Of course, I also love playing the music we recorded with Joe Lovano.

MD: How has the ECM aesthetic affected your drumming approach?

MM: The sound of ECM is mainly about the space. What I love about it is that it's not tiring for your ears. There's a lot of air and breath inside ECM music. No matter what kind of style, there is this air inside the music and the drumming. That approach has influenced me, even if there is a lot of notes being played on the drums by someone like Jack DeJohnette, there is this beautiful space that you hear off in the distance. It's fantastic for your ears and nice for your soul, it's never overwhelming.

MD: It's almost like the space and the air in the room becomes another member in the band.

MM: Exactly, that is what I am trying to do on the drums too.

MD: What are some of your favorite ECM recordings?

MM: There are so many… Jan Garbarek *In Praise of Dreams* (with Manu Katche' playing drums.) Although I don't play that kind of music so often, I like that record. Also, Jon Christensen, John Taylor, Bill Connors, and Eberhard Weber on Jan Garbarek's *Photo with Blue Sky, White Cloud, Wires, Windows, and a Red Roof.* The Garbarek-Stenson quartet record *Witchi-Tai-To* is great. Kenny Wheeler's *Double, Double You* with Michael Brecker and Jack DeJohnette, and Kenny Wheeler with Keith Jarrett and Jack DeJohnette on *Gnu High*. Edward Vesala's drumming on Stańko's album *Balladyna* is fantastic. More recently I like Michael Formanek's *Ensemble Kolassus* with drummer Tomas Fujihara, and Vijay Iyer's recordings.

Manfred Eicher has his own sense of music, so he has tried to have his all the records on his label have a kind of similarity to create a recognition. This is very smart and nice because when you hear that sound you know it's ECM music. But what's funny is that he doesn't demand any specific way of playing from you. He doesn't want you to fit into the ECM sound. It doesn't really work like that. If he worked like that, everything would be flat, it wouldn't be as deep as it is. Playing less notes and not too loud is *not* it. It's not about that. It's about beauty. I've heard this from other artists on other ECM sessions, it's about a good atmosphere, bringing the best of what you have, and having respect for the music. Once you have this respect, you start to play differently. That is very nice and deep advice directly from Manfred Eicher. He would always emphasize the character of the composition; with our trio it was usually a maximum of three takes per song.

MD: Since your father was a very famous musician, what type of advice did he give you about music?

MM: My father was stricter about the rules and musical discipline. He played in and loved big bands, so he would talk to me about taking care of and playing the arrangements. He taught me how to follow the accents on a chart, what to play before the accents, and how to set up the accents and play fills within the arrangements. I still play a lot with my father in his band.

MD: What is the jazz scene like in Poland?

MM: Jazz was introduced in Poland in the early 50s, but we were under the Russian Communist Party at the time. It was forbidden in Poland to learn jazz in school or in the conservatories. You couldn't play jazz because it was dangerous, if you were heard playing jazz in school, you would be expelled. It was difficult to hear any jazz or to get any written sheet music. But all the musicians were listening in secret to Willis Conover playing jazz records on the *Voice of America* on Armed Forces radio. The musicians would listen and write down what they heard, that's how they were learning about jazz.

Krzysztof Komeda was really important Polish jazz musician and composer at that time. He recorded an album called *Astigmatic* in 1965, that is recognized the greatest Polish jazz record ever, and very modern as well. Komeda hired two young Polish giants-Tomasz Stanko and Zbigniew Namyslowski, and Swedish drummer Rune' Carlsson for his band and that recording. Komeda moved to Los Angeles in '67 to start a career as a film composer and he did the music for movies by Polish film director Roman Polanski.

We 've had very important jazz festiwal in Warsaw called Jazz Jamboree since 1958. Miles Davis played there in 1983, and in 1989 I saw Michael Brecker there with Adam Nussbaum. Adam is one of my favorites. After 1989 many things changed, touring outside Poland started to become easier for us. Now the Polish jazz scene is exploding, there are all ages of musicians playing jazz today.

MD: What types of drums are you playing?

MM: At the Vanguard, John Riley was kind enough to let me play the Yamaha drums that he keeps there to play with the big band

on Monday nights, and I was told that he doesn't do that for many people, so I am very honored and thankful to him for that. But I have been playing Sonor drums for my entire life, my set is an 18, 10, 12, 14 Sonor DeLite set. Then I also have an older Sonor set. I have a very nice Sonor DeLite 5.5x14 snare, I used to have a 7x14 Sonor Lite, but it was destroyed in a fire. I played a Sonor 5.5 Bronze on Tomasz Stanko's *Soul of Things* record. I have an Istanbul ride with rivets that my father bought me in 1992, that is a very special cymbal. My other ride is a modern Istanbul OM, I have a 19" Mel Lewis model crash-ride on the left, a small 10" Bell cymbal, and 14" Istanbul hi-hats. And I use Vic Firth 5A sticks, brushes, and Remo Ambassador heads.

MD: How does growing up in Poland, make you play jazz differently?

MM: That's not easy for me to describe, to answer that correctly I would have had to grow up in America *and* Poland. The ECM babel is huge in European jazz, it is very important, and a lot of European artists have recorded for ECM, as well as Americans.

Being here in Poland and in this part of Europe, the light is different, the atmosphere is different, we are (possibly) more melancholic. All of that affects music and drumming. Europeans play the jazz rhythm in a bit different way; the rhythm is a little more straight up and down. But in my opinion, we should stop the dividing European jazz from American jazz, because after so many years it has all come together. It's inspiring to see how that has happened. That's what I hear.

MD: And that's what I hear when I hear the trio. It's a nice blend of European and American influenced music that pulls inspiration from everywhere.

MM: In the last few years I think my drumming is sounding more "American" in how I feel the beat. Maybe playing with Joe Lovano has helped that, I definitely feel it from him, and I probably learned it from playing with him too.

MD: Joe is also a GREAT drummer too, most people don't know that. When you were playing at the Vanguard, in the middle of a tune, you broke into a straight-ahead Jimmy Cobb type of groove, and Joe was all smiles.

MM: It's amazing when you simplify things it can open everything up, rhythm is amazing that way.

MD: How do you feel or define the difference between time and pulse?

MM: For me, pulse is more a singular way of thinking, you are thinking more about the bar. Time is a wider term, and a wider subject for me at least. Time is a more open thing, and it's more flexible. Time is closer to feeling for me, you can have good time but if it's played with a bad feeling (or without feeling,) it doesn't work for me. I think the feeling in jazz is the most important and profound ingredient. With emotion and feeling you can stretch time or shorten time, it becomes flexible. I like that approach, I think you do it because you're feeling the time, and when you feel the time the pulse and the pulsation of the music is nice. Those three terms pulse, feeling, and time are very related in my opinion. Steve Gadd is one of my favorite drummers, his time is incredible and so beautiful because it's got feeling! Of course, his pulse is always precise which is wonderful, but the fact that his pulse and time are filled of feeling is what makes it fantastic.

MD: That is very well said!

Check out Michal's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

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Andy Gander

Rhythmic Doctor from Down Under

By Daniel Bedard

In North America, unfortunately we rarely think about the tradition of drumming from other countries. Some of us have studied the evolution of English drumming. And if we have really dug deep maybe we have started to investigate the traditions of African, Brazilian, or Cuban drumming. But what about Australian drumming?

Andy Gander is a top Australian drummer and educator. In this interview he introduces us to the idea of **Developing a Polyrhythmic Idiolect** (Idiolect is a linguistic term that basically means "individual voice,") **Tuplet based rhythms**, (a tuplet is a rhythm or grouping that divides the beat into a different number of equal subdivisions like 5 or 7,) and the tradition of outstanding and **influential Australian drummers** like Greg Henson, Alan Turnbull, David Jones, Virgil Donati, Mark Kennedy, Greg Tell, Mark Riley, Rick Eastman, Chris Tarr, Hassan Hodgkinson, Gordon Rytmeister, Darryn Farrugia, Gerry Pantazis, Graham Morgan, Peter Blick, Ken Eadie, Kere Buchanan, Craig Naughton, Pete Drummond, and Simon Barker. *Have we grabbed your attention?*

MD: Can you tell us about how you got started on the drums?

AG: I was born and raised in Sydney, Australia. I started playing the drum set when my parents got me a kit at the age of 12, before that I'd been banging around the house on furniture, playing along to Beatles records from age six or seven. My three older sisters were into the Beatles, so as a kid in the 1960's there was always music around the house. As I got a little older, there was other pop music too. I don't exactly know why I was attracted to the drums I just remember playing along to records from an early age. Eventually I got some drums and I started listening to all these pop compilation recordings, like *20 Dynamic Hits* or *20 Explosive Hits*. I would play each album over and over, and learn all 20 songs verbatim, trying to copy the fills and beat patterns by ear. It was mostly the American pop music of the day, so I was hearing lots of Hal Blaine, although I didn't know anything about him at the time. It was all learning by ear, just a hobby but it kept growing. Eventually I took some lessons, started reading, and doing some basic stuff from *Stick Control*.

At age 14 I started doing gigs and things continued. During high school, I joined a local junior big band and gained experience in chart reading and jazz phrasing. By hearing and feeling the music on Count Basie recordings, playing it by ear, then correlating that to the notation on the charts— I gradually learned to interpret basic syncopated jazz phrasing.

MD: You were learning songs by ear before you got a drum set?

AG: Yes. I could (sort of) already play because I had been using my hands since age six or seven, and when the drums arrived, I was already tuned in to what simple pop songs were. Then I got the pedals working for a couple of basic rock beats, plus jamming along to records after school. The whole thing was about playing songs, I never thought about drums as anything separate from playing the tunes. To me that's what the drums were there for, and I still pretty much think about it in that way now. I didn't have any idea about the drums existing separately from music like, "You learn these mechanics and put them together." It was just coming from inside the songs, everything was by ear. We didn't have clinics back then it was all just playing along to records.

Henry Rasmussen

MD: So you mainly were into the Beatles and pop music of the day?
AG: Yes, but we had other records around the house, *The Sound of Music*, musicals, orchestral stuff, I was always listening to whatever records my family had. Later, when I got the drums, it was about copying music from the radio and TV. In those days, you would always have the radio on, even in bed. It's unbelievable the amount of music you can remember from when you were a kid, because it makes such an imprint on you at that age— you just seem to absorb it and keep it. It feels more difficult to learn music when you're older, but as a kid the absorption rate was ridiculous. I often go back and search YouTube for old pop songs just to reconnect with that initial feeling and motivation for playing. Some of it seems corny nowadays, but it's just the connection that happens during childhood, the thing that animates you to want to play the drums, it's good to reconnect with that and remember why you started in the first place.
MD: You were saying that you started doing gigs around the age of 14 years old, what kind of gigs were you doing back then?
AG: I was in The Young Northside Big Band." They played Sammy Nestico and Woody Herman charts that were the high school level big band and stage band repertoire of the time. Every Saturday afternoon, they would rehearse and play through about 20 charts. They also did gigs, and we even went to the United States to play at Monterey Jazz Festival when I was 16. We would occasionally play on television too, and local public concerts things like that.
MD: Had you figured out how to read at that point?
AG: Only the basics of rock and jazz. I had a rudimentary understanding of eighth note syncopated reading from Ted Reed's *Syncopation*. So, I was playing those swing phrases by ear but I could also recognize them on the paper. I understood the simple note values, how to basically set up and interpret the phrases and how these ideas would fit within the groove of the song. But I was playing music long before I knew what the notation meant. I was looking at the charts and relating that back and forth to how the music felt and sounded, I gradually put it together myself that way. I took a few lessons as well, they were mostly reading from Ted Reed's *Syncopation*, and George L. Stone's *Stick Control*.

By playing a lot, I eased my way into everything while I was still in school. From within that stage band, some of us split off into little groups, and through that I got into a great R&B funk band called This Side Up. They were adults and killer players, and they would come pick me up for gigs at night, then I'd be back in school next morning. There were so many gigs around we were just playing all the time. They did Billy Cobham/George Duke tunes, Steely Dan, Johnny and Edgar Winter, George Benson, Larry Carlton, and the popular funk and instrumental R&B of the mid to late 1970's. Some of those guys got me more interested in jazz and fusion, and when I went to Monterey with the big band I saw Roy Haynes, Victor Lewis, Ed Soph, Les DeMerle and Buddy Rich. Then we went to Tower Records in San Francisco and the great saxophonist Dale Barlow helped me fill up a suitcase with serious modern jazz records. Suddenly I possessed all this classic Tony, Elvin, Miles, and Coltrane stuff. That set off a whole new understanding of what jazz was.

> The whole thing was about playing songs, I never thought about drums as anything separate from playing the tunes. To me that's what the drums were there for, and I still pretty much think about it in that way now.

MD: It's amazing that you got to travel so much at such a young age.
AG: That was a big deal for us at the time. The incredible thing about that band was the man who ran it. His name was John Speight, he was a pianist and educator that cared about his students. He really looked after us and was always creating opportunities to introduce us to music. Whenever there was an important jazz artist like Count Basie (with Butch Miles on drums) or Ella Fitzgerald playing in Australia, we got to see them. Looking back, I was very lucky to have those experiences. Australia was a long way away from everything – nothing like now where you have access to everything with the internet. Back then we only got exposed to the great American jazz artists in person if they toured. The rest was all about buying records and sharing cassette tapes. However, the amount of musical talent we had in Australia at the time was amazing, and there were so many great drummers in rock, pop, and funk bands, it just seemed there was live music everywhere. That seemed completely normal to me. I thought, "I'm going to play in bands, that's what I'm going to do, they're everywhere!"

If you could play well with people, one thing would lead to another, and you found yourself in bands and gigs all over the place. I realize now it was a pretty incredible time, and things have changed a lot since those days. The culture of live music back then was something we just took for granted, there were incredible Australian drummers doing gigs everywhere.
MD: What happened once you were done with high school? Did you have any formal training in college or university?
AG: No, it was just gigging and practicing all the time. I got to experiment with many different kinds of music as well. Everything from avant garde, free jazz, post-bop jazz, fusion, rock'n'roll, punk— anything. There were gigs everywhere and a lot of cross-pollination of musicians moving between various circles. I just played and played. As I grew older, I started taking it more seriously as a career because I wanted to be called for respectable commercial dates, studio sessions, tours, and things like that. I wanted to make money. When I was a scruffy teenager I thought, "I'm going to play whatever I want all the time". I wasn't thinking about it as a "profession." My tendency was to play flat out regardless of anybody else, just following my own ideas and impulses. Later, I got more

serious about studying and cultivating certain things to be more responsible about playing music professionally and understanding the importance of context and teamwork.

MD: What sort of things did you consciously do to move forward?

AG: I started trying to emulate other players who were working a lot – checking out their attitude towards teamwork, time playing, reading, dynamics, style, and sound. I tried to stop turning every gig into whatever I thought it should be, which was usually some kind of drum bonanza—instead I focused on playing each idiom authentically, and really enjoying that. I noticed that when you did that, there was a lot of work around, and you could make a living. I gradually made some inroads, getting called by people who wouldn't have previously booked me as an unruly teenage jazz nut. As I took the craft of professional gigging more seriously, I also got to do television shows and recording sessions, and really dug doing that too.

MD: That was in your early twenties?

AG: No, this was more like mid-to-late twenties. I was doing jazz and fusion gigs in my late teens and early twenties. I did jazz tours, played the European festivals and things like that. In Australia back then, one of the bread-and-butter ways to make a living was freelancing in the Returned and Services League ("RSL") clubs and the Rugby League Football ("Leagues") clubs. That work was kind of like the vaudeville tradition. You had these entertainers and singers, it was everything from Elvis impersonators to jugglers, magicians, dancers and comedians, the whole showbiz thing. And of course, the acts always needed pickup musicians, so the phone would ring: "We've got a gig at the RSL club next Saturday night do you want to do it?" Then you'd put on a tuxedo, drive out there (it was always miles away) and sightread their charts. I did quite a lot of that with really polished professionals and weekend warriors. But that was a source of income and good real-world experience. Of course, we would also play weddings and informal rock or funk gigs in pubs and clubs, backing singers. Sometimes we were reading, sometimes not, and there were always various original projects bubbling on the side. But a lot of the bread-and-butter work was about "backing an act" where you show up, no rehearsal, a quick talk through before the show, and then read it down. I did hundreds of those when I was young. Later, I did bigger professional shows and productions, which (in some ways) were the same sort of thing musically, except with full rehearsals, full crew, great gear, proper money, nice hotels, and top-class professional artists. But I think the rougher experience of surviving through sightreading an unrehearsed show with amateur players teaches you certain important things about how strong you need to be.

Josh Gander

MD: When did you start to study drums, and with whom?

AG: Around age 18, I got to study with the great Australian jazz drummer Alan Turnbull who took me under his wing.

It was serious, but an informal thing – I would go to all of his gigs, load the gear to and from his car, like an apprentice in a way. He was an absolutely incredible jazz player – just phenomenal hands, and a phenomenal concept. To me, he had Joe Morello type hands, with the musical concept of Elvin, Roy, and Jack. Alan had a huge lasting influence on me. A bit later, I had a similar informal lesson relationship with the great David Jones who is an incredible drum genius and a huge influence on all of us Aussie musicians. Dave's influence on me was very much in the jazz fusion and polyrhythm department. He did great clinics too, and we would go to all his gigs. Back then, seeing Dave or Alan play live was like seeing an incredible American drummer playing in Australia. Dave was playing at an unbelievable level, his thing was very polyrhythmic with 5's and 7's, which has stuck with me ever since, but he was doing all this back in the early 1980s. After that, I had the privilege of taking lessons with Virgil Donati who was still living in Melbourne. He was very much into applying the Gary Chaffee thing to all his other stuff. Around that time, I had started working with Gary's books too, but Virgil was the first person that I met who had really incorporated them into his own system, which was in a class of its own even back then. This was early 90's and Virgil was doing lots of gigs and clinics, so we would always go see those. He also held small workshops with groups of eight or ten guys on pads and would take us through various chop builders and endurance exercises. For me, Virgil, David, and Alan were the ubiquitous players that inspired every Australian drummer, along with my other earlier heroes Mark Kennedy, Greg Tell, and Mark Riley. Everyone would gravitate towards those guys, learn from them, and take anything we could from them – and naturally I would always see if I could integrate any of it into my way of playing.

MD: You have definitely got your own thing now.

AG: I realized that I could never do exactly what my heroes do – and actually over time, the name of the game (in terms of having a personal style or voice) is to find your strengths, accept your limitations, and try to be rigorous about integrating the ideas that you like. I remember thinking, "I wish I could play like Virgil, David, Alan, or Mark," but I just couldn't— no one could, so over time I just stopped trying. Then you're just left with yourself. As you get older you accept that fact and try to make the best of it. Another reason I stopped copying them is because I noticed that my playing would always come out sounding like me anyway. You can't really cover it up in the end, no matter what kit you play or who you're trying to copy. You can do an impersonation— a caricature— but then you're not really playing from the heart. Once that happens, everything comes out sounding like you. But what matters is not trying to be "original"— what matters is being good. Then you might find some kind of a voice there. You're better off saying, "Maybe there's a personality there— maybe I can discipline and polish that, make the music work, and make the other players sound good." Because you're playing in your voice, you can develop an apparatus to articulate with your own voice. I tried to develop methods to enhance that, rather than just always referencing other people's ideas and falling short while feeling bad about it. I did that for a long time.

MD: What would you do to enhance the "Andy Gander" in you?

AG: This dovetails with my Ph.D. thesis, which deals with that exact question. The main method is to record yourself and listen back to while being ruthlessly detached about critiquing your own playing. Looking for obvious problems that need to be addressed and finding any little moments of originality. Finally, figuring out what those little moments of originality are, capture them, and build upon them. That was a central part of the thesis. We came up with ways to find a little speck of gold here or there. You'd find one and go, *"Bang! I did some little thing right there— that was an authentic moment of creativity."* It could have only been .01% of the whole song and the rest of it might have been generic, but there would be these brief little moments where you actually heard something that was original— not merely regurgitated from somewhere else. It was a small instance of actually solving a problem in real time, or a genuine improvised response to something in the music. That was our methodology in the Ph.D., it just seemed like a good way of trying map out your sonic identity.

In the 1990's, Dave Weckl often came to Australia, and we all got to see him up close. He was the first person I noticed who really emphasized recording yourself for study and self-teaching, so I started doing it. Critiquing your own playing is hard but valuable if you can stand to do it. It also helps with the psychological process of real time studio recording because you learn to adopt this focused and flowing attitude for recording. You can't take anything back when the tape is rolling, that's it, and you develop the habit of thinking like that all the time. Through that process you can capture these little "speck of gold" ideas and then base your practice routine from them. It's not about studying in a self-referential vacuum or closed feedback loop— it means applying classic methods (like *Stick Control, Syncopation,* Jim Chapin etc.) and other books *(Patterns, Master Studies, Conversations in Clave, Rhythmic Illusions*, etc.) to your own playing, in your own way, and using those systems and applying them to yourself. It's self-teaching based on established methods.

Dave Weckl often came to Australia, and we all got to see him up close. He was the first person I noticed who really emphasized recording yourself for study and self-teaching, so I started doing it.

MD: What is the title of your PhD thesis?

AG: It is called *Developing a Polyrhythmic Idiolect*. Idiolect is a linguistic term that basically means "individual voice." For example, the way that I speak English is unique or individualized in various little ways, there will be personalized pitch and timbral inflexions, idiosyncrasies of vocabulary, grammar, idiom, and a tone that identifies my "voice" within the language. You can recognize that as a

signature. We can approach our analysis of drumming language like that too because although you're more or less drawing on the same rhythmic resources that everybody else uses, but it's always going to have your own particular little spin on it. In the thesis, I was both the researcher, the subject, the observer outside the frame, and the guinea pig inside the frame. That position is already very familiar to any musician who has shedded seriously because when you practice, you're always stepping in and out of that frame. This is where the recording thing comes in too. That is, you enter the frame to record and capture yourself performing. Then, you step back outside the frame to listen and analyze it for "specimens," hoping to identify some of those little "specks of gold" I was talking about. You select ones that you like, transcribe them, and memorize them so that you can replicate them just like you would transcribe your favorite licks from anybody else whose playing you're studying.

MD: And those "specks of gold" were coming from various gigs you've done?

AG: Yes, they were emerging from gigs and sessions I did with other players who participated in the study. We did things that were specific to the study, and I would also record onto preexisting tracks. All of that became raw materials for generating these little archetypes, those little moments. We were looking for unrehearsed moments that just came up organically and spontaneously. I was aware of these things already happening, but I didn't know how to repeat them, or where they came from, because they weren't preplanned ideas. It didn't matter if they emerged a little rough, ideas can always be polished and refined later. What mattered was that they had my musical DNA in them.

Obviously, everything we do ultimately results from consciously working through a preexisting body of knowledge, all the shedding, listening, transcribing, books, rudiments, reading, etc. That is the tradition of the music and the great players we try to emulate. But some of the best creative moments emerge briefly then evaporate, so you can't retrieve them or build upon them. We all want more fresh ideas in our playing, we're basically trying to replace the generic stuff with the individualized stuff. I still love the good "generic" stuff, and surviving as a drummer depends on fluency with conventional vocabulary. But doing this specific study was an opportunity to think about that combination. There's a lot of great generic drumming. We all know about that, but what about these other signature things? Ideas that are more unique to us because they have our own spin on them. How could we identify those moments and promote the thinking behind them?

MD: When you found those moments, what would you do with them?

AG: I would transcribe something, memorize it, and replicate it. I would take that as a new starting point, start jamming on the new specimen, playing with it until further variants emerged. That process creates a loop cycle. From there, something else might emerge prompting more variants of the original. And even if 90% of the process seems predictable, occasionally you still get

Josh Gander

little sparks of something fresh. So that loop cycle was one method we used to generate a vocabulary that was "my own" because it had my imprint.

MD: What came out of that process?

AG: A book of asymmetric tuplet based groove studies. Because there was no systematic approach in my playing for developing triplet, eighth and sixteenth note grooves, we already have a large and evolved drum pedagogy based on that. With the exception of Gary Chaffee's *Patterns*, Gavin Harrison's *Rhythmic Illusions* and parts of *Stick Control*, all the drum set books that I used in the past dealt with rates of 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 subdivisions. Therefore, the grooves and modes of improvisation I felt most fluent with were based in those rates, but whenever I went for a solid groove or some jazz comping in tuplet rates I felt immediately relegated to a very limited data base of prefabricated moves. I felt that I lacked the mechanics needed to calibrate my phrasing within those gears. In 2016 I couldn't find a method that addressed this in the specific ways I needed, like 5's & 7's applied to the linear Garibaldi stuff, the Gary Chester Systems, or the Jim Chapin jazz mechanics. So I started writing my own.

> Young drummers have a challenge now, they are inundated with information, but they don't have the experience to understand which information is most necessary, or how to use it.

My book is largely based around what I call "analogs", because they work like rhythmic synonyms of normal everyday figures. For example, an analog of two straight eighths could be the 1st and 4th partial of a quintuplet. When you do that, the "and" of each beat starts leaning in a certain way because it falls on the 4th quintuplet. You've moved it over, creating an asymmetrical flow of eighths just like we do with swung eighths in jazz. They still function compositionally as they did before, when they were just plain old "straight eighth notes", but the recalibrated version lands differently, and opens up a bunch of new possibilities. For me, taking control of that concept meant rethinking my default groupings, and building new mechanical habits. I started building a simple practical workbook that recalibrates 16th note grooves and jazz comping based on tuplet "analogs" of those functions. Method-wise, I tried to emulate parts of my favorite method books dealing with stickings, groove systems, jazz comping and reading, all calibrated to 5 and 7.

MD: And why did you do that in the formal setting of a thesis instead of just doing it on your own?

AG: You're required academically to show thesis outcomes that point to future research possibilities, and one of the things that emerged from my project was this idea of a "personal pedagogy" for developing tuplet based time keeping. That's where the idea came from, but I had to find my own pathway to it. That meant designing a very practical sticking, phrasing, reading, and independence method for playing 4/4 jazz and funk grooves in tuplet mode. It was never originally intended as a "drum book," it just began as an index of patterns and phrasing for my own use. But whenever I shared it with students or in classes, I realized that other drummers felt the same as me, so it made sense to offer it as a book.

MD: Did you do the PhD at the University of Sydney?

AG: Yes, I did my Ph.D. at Sydney University from 2013 to 2016, and prior to that I'd done a Master's at Melbourne University from 2004 to 2006. Both were performance-based degrees, so I was able to channel my experience as a player into formal academic research and analysis. Those experiences helped crystalize some important playing concepts, which has helped with the teaching side of things too, because you must learn to concretize your thoughts and articulate them clearly.

MD: Why did you do it in this setting instead of doing it on your own and studying with a guy like Gary Chaffee or Claus Hessler?

AG: Tracing it back, my concept was really framed by the inspiration I took throughout the years from Australian drummers David Jones, Virgil Donati, Gordon Rytmeister, Ken Eadie, and Simon Barker. Their polyrhythmic ideas have had the most immediate impact on me as far as tuplet thinking goes. I've taken my own path based largely on those influences.

In 2012, I learned that Simon had done a Ph.D. on integrating Korean rhythmic traditions with jazz improvisation. His was very much a practice-based study too, and he encouraged me to do something similar as an autoethnographic project based on my own playing. We integrated various polyrhythmic things as a pathway for locating and developing your own voice. This model can also serve as analytic tool for other players and researchers. In my own case, after playing other people's music for so many years this was an opportunity to ask, "Is there anything in my drumming that is more "me" than "not me?"" I pursued that from 2013 to 2016, and it was published in 2017.

MD: Who are some of your biggest influences? Either drummers or non-drummers?

AG: The first conscious jazz influence was Buddy Rich. Then came the influence of Billy Cobham, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Steve Gadd, Peter Erskine, and Terry Bozzio. They all came my way by just wandering through the local record store. The first Australian drummer that had a big impact on me in person was Greg Henson, the was the first live drummer I ever saw, he was playing for *Jesus Christ Superstar* and it completely blew my mind. We were sitting close to the orchestra pit, and I could see, hear, and feel Greg playing the show. From that moment on, I wanted to be a drummer. The next huge impact was Mark Kennedy, a legendary Australian drum hero. At age 15 my older band mates would smuggle me into clubs to see him. Mark was so exciting and a master studio/session player too just an amazing natural prodigy on the drums. My next hero was Greg Tell, an American drummer living in Sydney back then. He had a whole other incredible way

of playing funk music that was just completely mind-blowing to me at the time. Mark and Greg were my first two local drum heroes. Alan Turnbull and David Jones were my models for jazz and fusion playing. My other drum hero was Mark Riley, who tragically died in a motorcycle accident. Mark was a monster fusion drummer and the first guy who turned me on to Vinnie Colaiuta and could play in that vein. All of those guys had a huge impact on me and everyone else in Sydney back then. Since then, I have tried to absorb all the good drummers. I was always a huge Gary Husband fan, as well as Tommy Campbell and Trilok Gurtu – but it was the Australian guys who have probably had the most direct influence. Living and visiting in various Australian cities I took bits and pieces from everyone. In Perth, it was Rick Eastman, Chris Tarr, and Hassan Hodgkinson. In Melbourne, it was Virgil Donati, Darryn Farrugia, Gerry Pantazis, Graham Morgan, and Peter Blick (plus Joe Chindamo on piano.) In Brisbane, it was Kere Buchanan and Ken Eadie. In Sydney, it was Gordon Rytmeister, Craig Naughton, Dave Jones, Pete Drummond, and Simon Barker (plus James Muller on guitar, Daryl Pratt on vibes and Steve Hunter on bass.) They're basically the guys who taught me and pushed me as drummers, or as band leaders.

Recently, guys like Dali Mraz and Steve Michaud have become hugely influential to me. I met Steve online and found out he'd studied seriously with Gary Chaffee. Steve is one of the strongest interpreters of Gary's method I've ever heard. He's really absorbed and extended that concept and made it his own. He's an absolutely phenomenal artist. A total monster and also a great educator and thinker. He's someone I would really love to study with. And Dali is just a complete monster. I was lucky enough to meet and see Eric Moore too. It's just beyond belief how great he plays. I'm a huge fan of Matt Garstka and Gergo Borlai too. And of course, Pete Drummond, a mind-boggling player and a great friend.

MD: In your bio, I read that you played with some pretty well-known guys like Ernie Watts, Joe Pass, John McLaughlin, Michael Brecker, and many more. Are there any of those experiences that stand out?

AG: As a freelance player in Australia, I played for visiting artists who travelled without their own rhythm section. That's how I got to play with these guys, I just happened to be there at the right time. The gigs that I got into it the most were with Kenny Kirkland, Ernie Watts, and Kenny Wheeler. Kenny Kirkland's gig was unbelievable – totally unrehearsed, just a quick talk through and we played a jazz festival. The Ernie Watts gigs were rehearsed, with the incredible Australian pianist Joe Chindamo who was touring with Billy Cobham back then. The Kenny Wheeler thing was absolutely amazing too. In Melbourne, I was in a great house band on *Tonight Live*, a Letterman style late night show. The bandleader was an incredible jazz musician, Paul Grabowsky, and touring jazz artists passing through town would always appear John McLaughlin, Joe Pass, Nat Adderley, all sorts of well-known names. We got to play with them and sometimes we really got into it— especially in the commercial breaks. I was really blessed to have those experiences.

MD: You have done a fair amount of teaching in various places over the years. Can you tell us about your teaching approach?

AG: I try and scope out where the student is musically. Do they have a background in music? Are they trained? Can they read? Have they got good ears and rhythmic coordination? Are they gigging? Do they practice? I start with those kinds of questions and proceed from there. I like studious guys, but everyone's different. It depends on what they want out of music.

One thing I noticed about the difference between some drum students and (for instance,) violin students or clarinet students, is this… When a beginner signs up for violin or clarinet, they know that they're going to have to read, and that it might take them six months just to get any sound out of the instrument. They must develop an embouchure, and it's just going to be a lot of squeaking and squawking and scraping for a long time— they know that going in, so they must be committed. Drummers don't necessarily start out thinking they'll need to read or persevere with formal technique exercises the way you do with violin. There's just no way to study classical violin or clarinet without playing scales.

But sometimes teaching drums in the age of YouTube and Instagram, you find guys who don't want to read or study rudiments. I don't want to make lessons unpleasant for those people I want them to enjoy music, engage and have a great time. If they only want to "jam," and that's what they want without discipline, it's all just jamming. Years down the road, you'll still just be jamming with no foundation or direction. To play music I believe you need to learn things about being a team player, following directions, reading, staying inside a track, and understanding meanings within a style. Those things are important to me. Yes, I try to meet students wherever they are, but from there, you equip them with reading, rudiments, stick control, independence, and they can use those tools to teach themselves. That's how it was for me as a kid. Sure, I got a few early lessons when teachers showed me how to practice *Syncopation*, *Stick Control,* and the Jim Chapin book. All the good drummers I knew were all practicing the same things, which motivated me to practice those books. Now, I just try to equip students with solid methods for teaching themselves, and for shedding within some kind of systematic framework, whatever style of player they are.

> I'm old enough to know what I need, but if I was 14 today, I'd feel totally overwhelmed by the volume of available content online. I wouldn't know what to choose or why.

MD: Do you still have a practice routine?

AG: Lately I'm using systems from my book and stuff that emerges from those studies. I sort of modeled it after books I practiced as a kid. For example, *Stick Control* has sticking patterns, *Syncopation* takes written figures and play them against something else. My quintuplet and septuplet stuff follows

that approach— which is pretty much what we've always been doing, just calibrated to 5's and 7's. The other element I work on is transcribing Carnatic rhythms on the drums. B.C. Manjunath is a great Mridangam artist, and I tried playing some of his Konnakol stuff on the drum set in my own way. I also tried translating a tabla solo from the great Yogesh Samsi. You can find those videos on my YouTube channel. I basically use these as practice drills for specific rhythmic areas of my own playing. Once you have a rhythmic skeleton transcribed, you can place it on the drums in various ways then create exercises for developing specific areas within that. Some of the ideas in my book came out of trying to play these Indian solos.

MD: How do you go about transcribing those solos? Do you slow them down?

AG: Yes, I make loops using Transcribe and Amazing Slow Downer, learning things bar by bar and line by line. With those solos it's pretty straight forward because the articulations are so clear and precise. Things are clearly structured within the forms too, so I start with little chunks of one, two, or four bars. Then I reassemble them in a series of blocks and memorize the piece that way. I usually spend several weeks on a piece. After a while, you start to recognize motifs and themes emerging and recurring, and you can begin to grasp the structural thinking behind it. I got to play with B.C. Manjunath in Germany. Dave King, the bass player, sent me a new piece and I spent a week learning it. We didn't rehearse, but briefly talked it through a day before the gig with B.C. and vocalist Varijashree Venugopal. To me, it was an extremely complex piece, with groupings of 7's, 9's and 11's. I had learned it by rote using my usual transcribe and memorize system. But B.C. and Vari both instantly recognized the rhythms and the form – all within five minutes, just from reciting the Konnokol. That was the rehearsal – no notes. Two hours later back at the hotel, B.C. sent through a sound file. He and Vari had made an iPhone demo, performing the whole piece perfectly and already embellishing it superbly. Unbelievable!

MD: I've seen you perform some amazingly complex polyrhythmic pieces. Can you give us any advice on how to develop this type of playing?

AG: I focus on finite rhythmic values – that is, rational rhythms that are mathematical and concrete. Konnakol is great for that because the syllable structures have specific time values within a fixed meter. I also used Gary Chaffee's *Patterns Vol. I & II,* and I look at his system the same way. Actually, when I first started really checking out the Indian stuff, it felt familiar and seemed very similar to Gary's thinking. Basically, my advice would be to start with mathematically locked systems. Also, use machines: that is, program rhythms into music software like Sibelius and Logic then check your accuracy against the machine so there are no approximations and no guessing. Chaffee has these little etudes with sticking systems related to the grouping structures. I love his exercises, they're so ingenious and they point you towards a particular way of playing and thinking, it's a whole concept for organizing rhythm. His phrasing is so hip. I was always hearing and feeling certain things that I couldn't intellectualize, especially the "Zappa style nested tuplets" stuff. It seemed impenetrable, but once I got the Chaffee books, I started unlocking some of Zappa's rhythmic stuff. I'd also recommend Gavin Harrison's *Rhythmic Illusions* which I got in the late 1990's. It had great displacement stuff and some really cool master sticking patterns in 5 and 7 rates.

I try to remember that that not everyone has the same musical personality type, some people think very mathematically and relate "spatially" to seeing rational rhythms written out, but not everyone is like that. There are other valid ways of playing "polyrhythmically" where you can't always locate on a hierarchical framework precisely. I can really enjoy those drummers who create through a system of rhythmic cognition that might be opaque to me, but whose playing still suggests important musical things to my ear, even though I don't necessarily understand how they're thinking. I get motivated to try and emulate some of the same ideas, but through processing the ideas in my own framework of polyrhythmic interaction. I can enjoy players who are or aren't grid based.

As you grow up you become more open minded about enjoying guys who don't share the same operating system as you. It's a musical personality trait they've developed to an incredibly high degree, and one that I haven't reached yet, because I'm habituated to a particular way of thinking about how time is subdivided. But I love the freer way of playing because of what it suggests to me. The Jack DeJohnette quote in John Riley's book about the washing machine sums it up beautifully: the idea that you have a fixed regular rotation of the barrel within which the shape of clothes dropping down can be relatively random. It's a neat picture and a great reminder that there's no single way to think, play, teach, or learn rhythm.

For example, you could say that scoring on paper in "rational rhythms" is a convenient way of capturing and representing ideas, but the notation is just the symbol of the idea, not the idea itself. Then again, maybe that distinction has begun to change in our contemporary context because of the technology. I don't know this for sure, but I feel as if this might explain how the asymmetrical tuplet based groove thing has emerged. Programmers started it, and then human drummers began reverse engineering those subdivision relationships – but it was the computer that enabled creative programmers working in popular electronic, hip-hop, and R&B music. to do it. It emerged from that culture not from some avant-garde art music that nobody dances to. Yet it has this amazing polyrhythmic thing built into it. I got interested in that, because some of the same ideas had been rattling around inside my head

To study something properly you drill down into it, then move on and attack another area while you're deeply focusing on one specific thing and being methodical about that one thing.

for years, but I never dared to try them on a dance gig, there seemed to be no place for them. Consequently, I never developed that approach. But now it's becoming commonplace, so I wanted to integrate that more into my own jazz and funk playing. I think we're living in an interesting musical time. "Popular" dance rhythms are being filled with all sorts of polyrhythmic implications that weren't there 30 years ago.

MD: You have talked about a book on those 5's and 7s tuplet rhythms. Is there a plan to publish it?

AG: Definitely. It's basically a simple and practical workbook of quintuplet and septuplet groove patterns that don't require much explanation. The concept is transmitted via the exercises without too much abstract theoretical discussion. The exercises are mostly based on simple backbeat and swing patterns in 2/4 or 4/4. There are stickings, source reading materials, and independence exercises where the phrasing concept is developed. It continues into playing the stickings and beats, reading the notation, and hearing the sound files. For me, exploring this type of playing requires some sort of a methodical plan, a practical workbook with very concrete exercises. When I started thinking about developing this in 2016, I couldn't find something like that. A lot of the patterns are drills for recalibrating standard syncopated phrasing to 5 and 7 tuplets within the parameters of conventional funk and jazz timekeeping – ideas that we all play, that are just not usually based on tuplets.

MD: Do you have any tips for the younger generation of drummers coming up?

AG: There's a video on YouTube where a couple of Italian drummers ask Steve Gadd "What is groove?" His answer is perfect, he says, "A groove is an agreement." That simple statement conveys the essence of what good drummers do. You're always looking to unify the music and glue everything together as one organism. There are various ways to do it, but the key is that all music (that works) has that unity of purpose. So my playing advice is, it's your overall goal to get that agreement. You practice methods and techniques for doing that, so everything you do works to unify the band. Young drummers have a challenge now, they are inundated with information, but they don't have the experience to understand which information is most necessary, or how to use it.

Henry Rasmussen

In the 1970's there was less to think about. I had three books and about twenty records, and that was it! But they were great books and great records, and I got to really know them. Today, I've got 3000 tunes on my phone and hardly know any of them! With experience playing, you can make informed choices to filter out redundancies. I'm old enough to know what I need, but if I was 14 today, I'd feel totally overwhelmed by the volume of available content online. I wouldn't know what to choose or why. That might be where today's teachers can help, narrow down the focus to keep things on track.

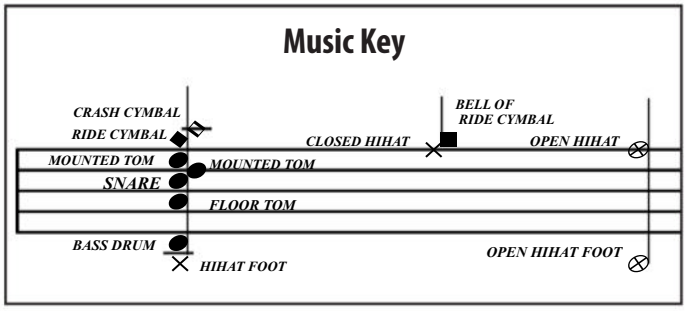
Bill Evans talked about self-teaching and selecting things that are narrow, then really drilling into them to own and understand each thing you're attacking, rather than just listening on the surface level and skimming over stuff that you never fully grasp. To study something properly you drill down into it, then move on and attack another area while you're deeply focusing on one specific thing and being methodical about that one thing. I think there's something to be said for doing that.

Check out Andy's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

"Smells Like Teen Spirit"

Transcription by Marc Atkinson

This month's transcription dives into the opening track from the iconic Nirvana album *Nevermind*, spotlighting the incredible drumming of Dave Grohl. It's a masterclass on how to drive a band. Once the drums kick in the energy is relentless with Grohl playing like he just robbed a bank! I defy you not to stomp your feet or bang your head once the drums start. This transcription provides valuable reading practice with some classic licks. The straightforward yet obtainable technique that is required, makes it a perfect study to refine your sense of groove and drive. Learning and playing this piece is an absolute blast!



SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT

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Marc Atkinson, a dedicated musician, honed his craft under the guidance of the renowned Gary Chaffee. Now calling Las Vegas home, Marc is on the brink of unveiling his labor of love—a comprehensive transcription book that promises to captivate music enthusiasts worldwide.

Check out Marc's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

To Master Your Craft, Go Outside of It

By Chris Lesso

I have many favorite "drummers" that aren't drummers at all: Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, Eddie Van Halen, and Bruce Lee. These non-drummers have just as much impact on my expression as the great drummers. Sticking within your field, can make things feel stale after a while, devoid of any outside inspiration. If you wanted to be a *master* chef, only studying food would make you a *mediocre* chef. It's exciting to see something you love in a whole new light!

Combining influences from completely different fields may seem crazy at first, but following your intuition is what really brings out your voice. What eccentric influences would supercharge your drumming skills? Go outside your discipline to make connections most will never see. The more unique a mix of influences that you can draw from, the more of YOU will be revealed in your craft. To be a champion athlete, study dance. To become a master chef, study military strategy. Just because it's never been done, doesn't mean it can't be done.

Why not mix personal empowerment and cycling? This became Soul-Cycle. Why not mix Kung-Fu with hip hop? This became the Wu-Tang Clan. Why not unleash inner confidence through the joy of drumming? This became the LTR DRUMMING 'Life Through Rhythm' journey.

"What I love doing is cold calling people and getting their book list. What did you read? What did you learn?" —Kobe Bryant

One of my all-time non-drumming influences is basketball titan Kobe Bryant. He lived the "white belt mentality" lifestyle, always staying a humble student of his craft. Always hungry for new challenges, he would boldly approach anyone that could guide him to new unexplored areas. The world is yours if you have the courage to seize the moment by asking the right questions. The answers could alter the trajectory of your life. Anyone you choose can be your mentor, and most people are very giving with their life experiences, which can save you years of toil and frustration.

Kobe's list of self-chosen teachers included contacting billionaire Chris Sacca to learn about finance, designer Giorgio Armani to learn about retirement, and magnate Oprah Winfrey for business advice. Kobe also approached legendary composer John Williams for leadership advice. What does conducting an orchestra have to do with basketball? John explained that as a composer, when you've got all of those vastly different sounds at your fingertips, you've got to know how to bring them into harmony as one. He explained that as a leader it's better to ask people questions, rather than just tell them what to do when things go wrong.

You may not have Kobe's contact list but be brave and just ASK.

Once you've studied the best people you can find, why stop there? Kobe actually turned to the animal kingdom for knowledge, analyzing springing cheetahs and predatory sharks to internalize their movements. For centuries, warriors like the Samurai and Aboriginal tribes have used the practice of looking to the wisdom of nature for guidance. Kobe went swimming with sharks to study their movements and challenge his mindset by facing fear. For the curious at heart, this becomes a way of life. By bringing these lessons back to basketball, Kobe mastered his craft by stepping outside of it. He knew that the secret to one discipline was to explore another, and the secret to mastery is to draw from any source that inspires.

Don't Think Like a Drummer

The secret to one discipline is to steal from another. Thinking outside the drum paradigm allows us to see our craft in a whole new light, often simplifying the process. Papa Jo Jones looked to tap-dancing for new sounds, Frank Sinatra tried to get his voice to emulate Lester Young's saxophone phrasing. Bass player Rich Brown mimicked the tonality of Stevie Wonder's singing to change up his style. The irony is, by stretching far outside the norm, we find more of ourselves in the process.

As drummers, we can steal from so many different places that, at first glance, seem to have nothing to do with drumming. Some of my favorites are dancing, martial arts, and calligraphy. The focus, perseverance, and grit of Navy SEALS also had a big impact on me. Another revelation was Bruce Lee's attitude and philosophy to use simplicity, directness, and freedom in his self-expression. Drumming has direct commonalities with the discipline and creativity of golf, Jiu Jitsu, and painting. I also know more than a few drummers that feel a deep connection to the passion and improvisation of cooking to influence what they do behind the kit. The sources of inspiration are endless!

However, what if we looked to drumming to supercharge our lives? It would be a personal journey, but the greater aim would be to get outside your "drumming only bubble" and see every day in a clear new light. TRANSFORM through DRUMMING today! Connect with Chris to start your 'Life Through Rhythm' journey with your free training: **chrislesso.net/LTRDRUMMING**

Check out Chris's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

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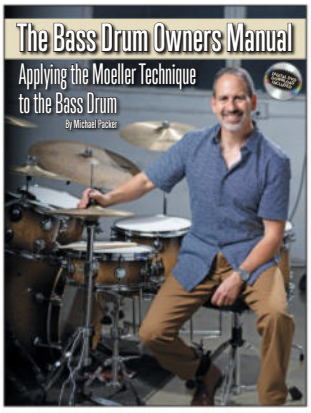
The Bass Drum Owners Manual:

Hand and Foot Etudes #1 and #2

By Michael Packer



This month *Modern Drummer* will continue to include excerpts from Michael Packer's essential book on bass drum control and technique *The Bass Drum Owners Manual: Applying the Moeller Technique to the Bass Drum.* As you will see, this is a new way of thinking about bass drum (and foot) control that is based in an old, popular, and useful hand technique called The Moeller Technique. Michael addresses the essential components of bass drum and hi-hat control. Let Michael's wisdom and the wisdom of the Moeller Technique help you improve the control, sound, and eventually speed, of your feet, regardless of musical style.

The following sixteenth note, and triplet based Hand and Foot Etudes are a continuation to the exercises that we developed in the last few months. These are designed to aid in the development of bass drum technique within grooves. Focus on the proper playing motions and relaxation of the feet and legs. The hi-hat can play open and closed sounds. To play the open sounds you can play with the heel up for a nice, tight, "chick" sound. If the tempo is slow, and leaving the heel up is uncomfortable, drop the heel to the heel plate. This will give a more open or legato sound.

Begin playing these exercises slowly. When comfortable, gradually increase the tempo. Bars containing two or more 8th notes will be played as written. If the tempo is too fast for leg strokes apply the ankle down motions.

Hand and Foot Etude #1

Hand and Foot Etude #2

Check out Michael's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *The Bass Drum Owners Manual* at moderndrummer.com

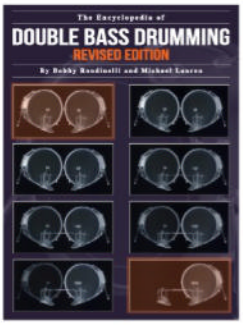
The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming

Eighth Note Triplets

By Bobby Rondinelli

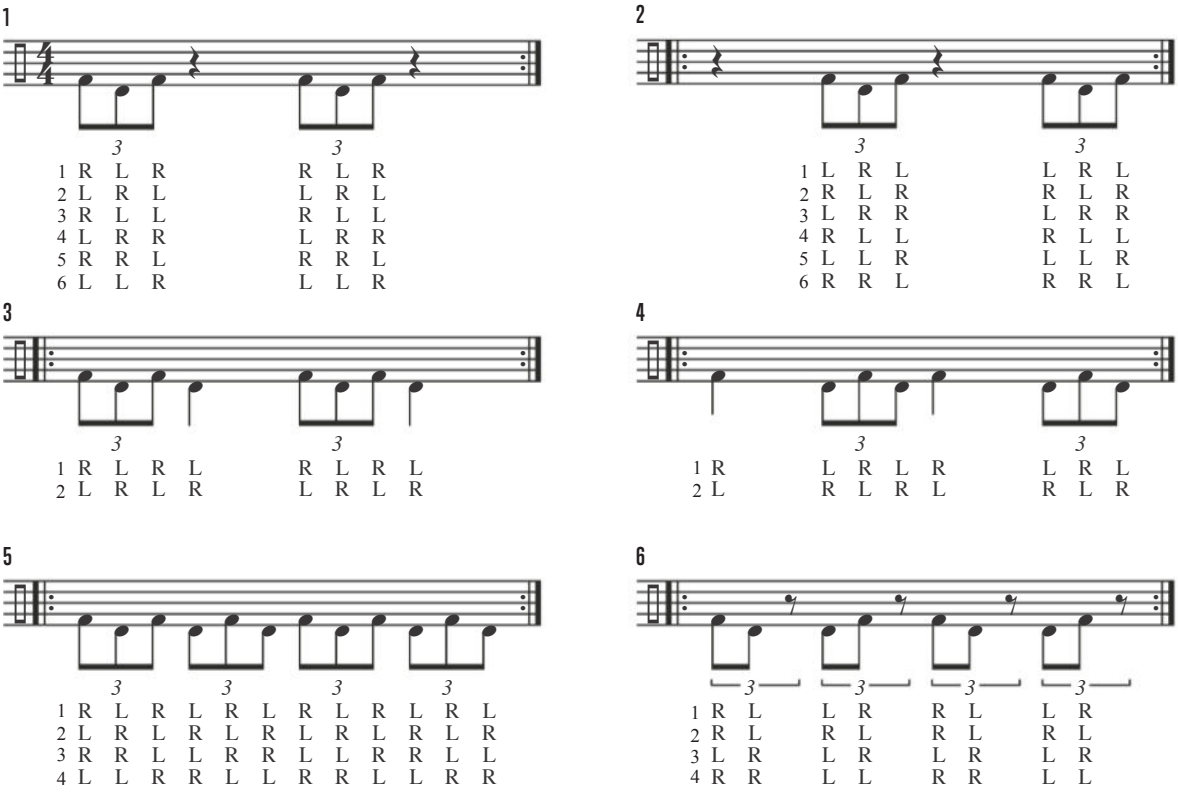
This article of double bass drumming with eighth note triplets comes from the original book *Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming*, which is also included in the new and revised edition. Triplets are a challenging aspect of double bass drumming due to the fact that the right hands and right feet (and left hand and left feet) don't always line up and play at the same time within beats and grooves. Take the challenge and introduce eighth note triplets to your double bass drum vocabulary.

In the new and revised edition of the *Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming*, Bobby Rondinelli includes nine new double bass drumming chapters. The new and expanded edition covers contemporary techniques such as bass drum double strokes, feet-only exercises, binary and ternary rhythms, "skiplets", beat turnarounds, the "ladder", and playing doubles with the hands while playing singles with the feet. These concepts will challenge your playing while expanding your double bass vocabulary. If practiced with intention and diligence, this material will help to prepare you for the demands of today's music. This material is advanced, but completely attainable for anyone who has completed the previous chapters in the book.



- The most common way to play triplets is to alternate them (RLR LRL).
- The warm-ups include a number of other footings that will help your coordination.
- Keep the triplets sounding wide and even, don't rush them.
- Notice that when leading with your right foot, the back beat falls with your left foot.
- Some beats in this section have more involved snare drum parts.
- Continuous shuffles are written with "strong-foot-lead" for practical purposes. See examples 30, 31, 32, 34, 38, 39, and 71.
- Triplets are not just used in shuffles.
- Although eighth note triplet double bass is generally played at fast tempos, don't overlook practicing all of the exercises at slow tempos. Slow tempos are just as challenging as fast ones.
- Working with these exercises will give you a real grasp on double bass triplet technique.

Warm-Ups



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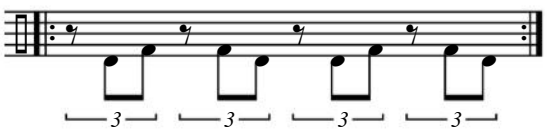

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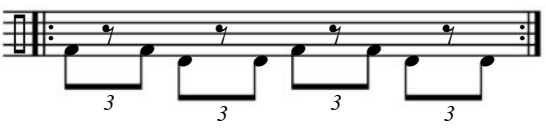

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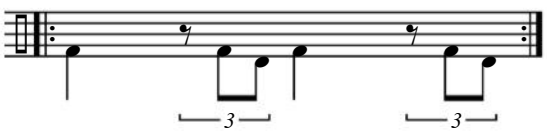

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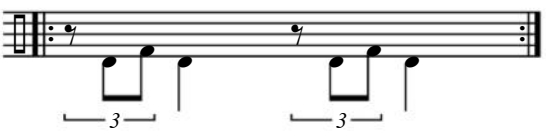

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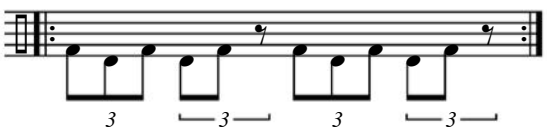

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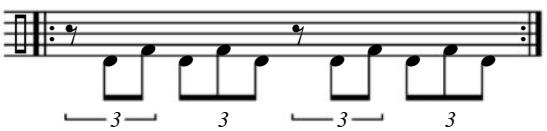
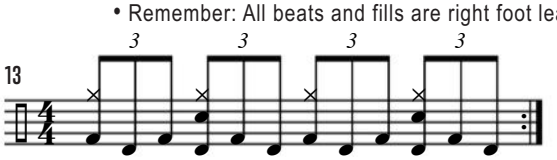


Beats

• Remember: All beats and fills are right foot lead. Other possible footings are included where written.

13



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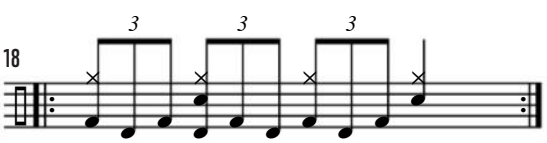

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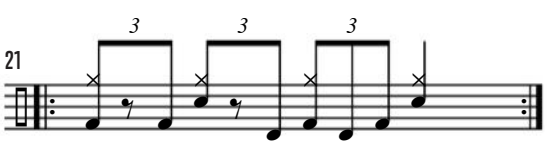

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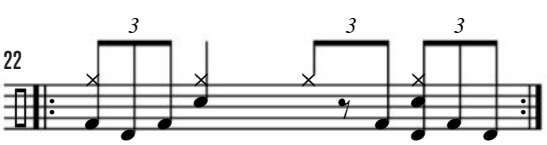

23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
1 R R L L R R L L
2 L R L R L R L R
31
1 R R L L R R L L R R L L R L R L R L
2 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R
32
1 R R L L R R L L R L R L R L R L R L R L
2 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R
33
34
1 R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L
2 L R L R L R L R L R L R L L R R

35
36
37
38
1 R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L
2 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R
39
1 R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L
2 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L L
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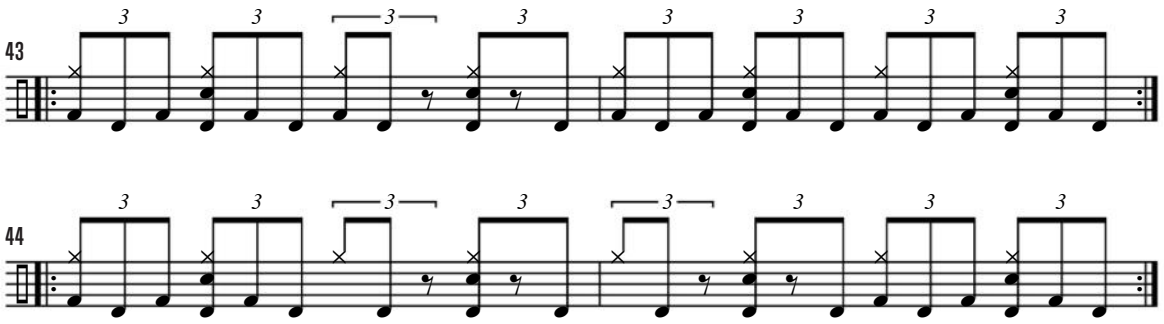
41
42



Fills

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Check out Bobby's *Modern Drummer* profile pages and get your copy of *The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming* at moderndrummer.com

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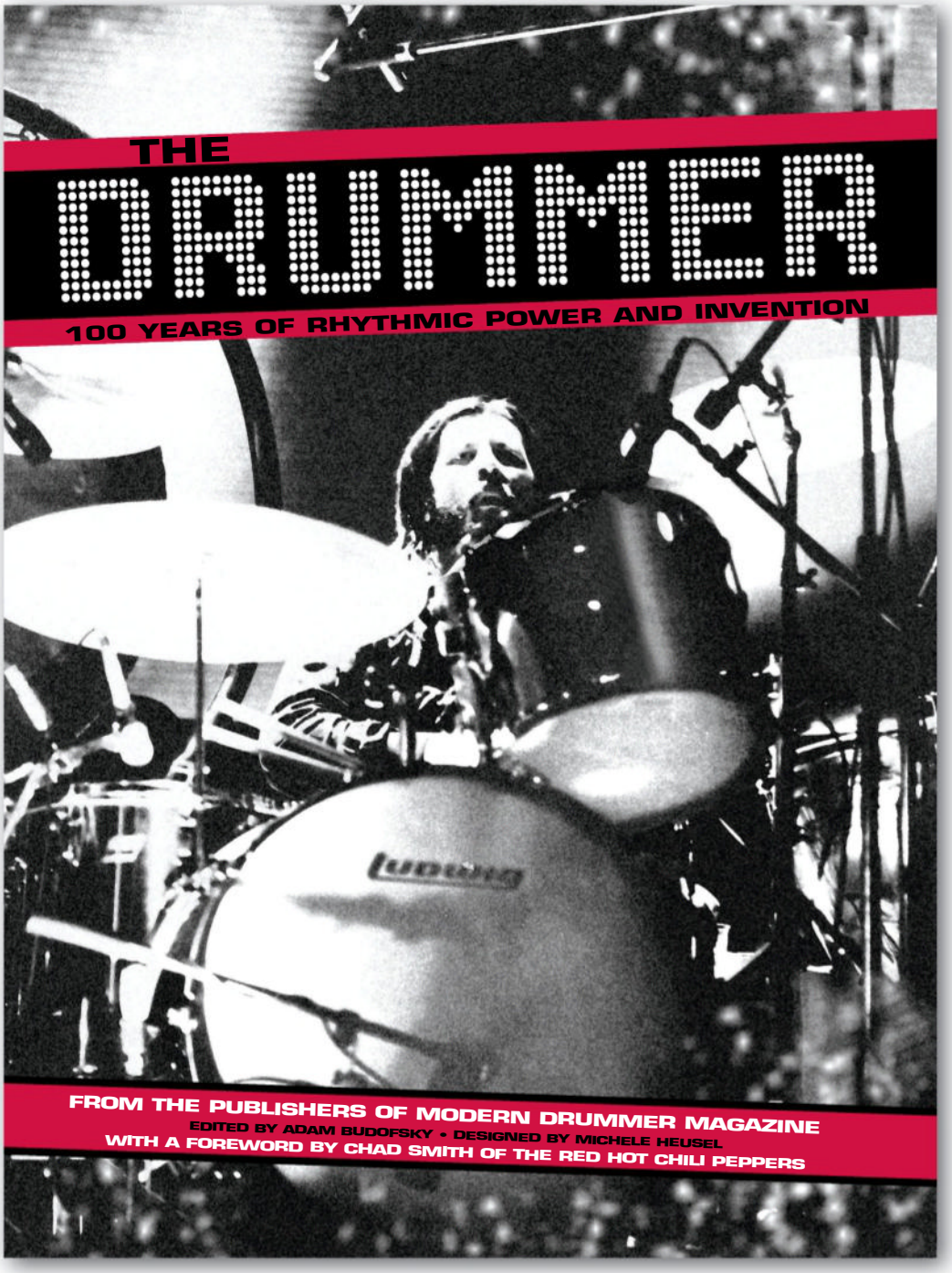

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Triplets with Flams

By Joe Morello

These exercises should be played as written, on a snare drum or practice pad, without accenting the flams. After playing these at a medium dynamic, practice them at various dynamic levels, from very soft to very loud. You should also practice different ways of playing the flams, — from very closed, *almost flat*— to somewhat open. As with any exercise, adapt it to your own particular needs, and to the type of music you will be playing. A rudimental drummer will probably use a lot of arm motion in playing the flams; a concert drummer might want to work on these using finger and wrist control; a drum set player might want to play the flams between different drums. Use your imagination. These examples are only to give you ideas.

10
Ⓡ L L Ⓡ L Ⓡ L Ⓡ L Ⓡ L R Ⓛ R R Ⓛ R Ⓛ R Ⓛ R Ⓛ R L
11
R R Ⓡ L L Ⓛ R R Ⓡ Ⓛ L Ⓛ R R Ⓡ L L Ⓛ R R Ⓡ Ⓛ L Ⓛ
12
Ⓡ R Ⓡ L L L L L Ⓡ Ⓛ R R Ⓛ L Ⓛ R R R R R Ⓛ Ⓡ L L
13
Ⓡ L L L L Ⓡ L L L Ⓡ R R Ⓛ R R R R Ⓛ R R R Ⓛ L L
14
Ⓡ Ⓡ Ⓡ Ⓡ L Ⓡ L Ⓡ L Ⓡ R R Ⓛ Ⓛ Ⓛ Ⓛ R Ⓛ R Ⓛ R Ⓛ L L
15
Ⓡ L R Ⓛ Ⓛ Ⓛ Ⓡ L R Ⓛ Ⓛ Ⓛ Ⓡ L R Ⓛ Ⓛ Ⓛ Ⓡ L R Ⓛ Ⓛ Ⓛ
16
Ⓡ R R R R Ⓛ L L L L Ⓡ R R R R Ⓛ L L L L Ⓡ L L L
17
Ⓡ L L Ⓡ L Ⓡ Ⓛ R R Ⓛ R Ⓛ Ⓡ L L Ⓡ L Ⓡ Ⓛ R R Ⓛ R Ⓛ
18
Ⓡ L Ⓡ Ⓛ Ⓛ R Ⓛ R Ⓛ Ⓡ Ⓡ L Ⓡ L Ⓡ Ⓛ Ⓛ R Ⓛ R Ⓛ Ⓡ Ⓡ L
19
Ⓡ L R Ⓛ R L R Ⓛ R L Ⓡ L Ⓡ L R Ⓛ R L R Ⓛ R L Ⓡ L

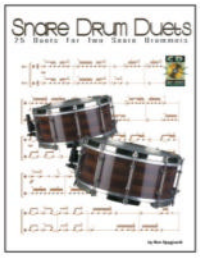
20
Ⓡ L R Ⓛ R L R L Ⓡ L R Ⓛ Ⓡ L R Ⓛ R L R L Ⓡ L R Ⓛ
21
Ⓡ R R R R R R Ⓛ R R R Ⓛ L L L L L L Ⓡ L L L
22
Ⓡ L R R Ⓛ R L L Ⓡ L R R Ⓛ R L L Ⓡ L R R Ⓛ R L L
23
R R Ⓛ R L L Ⓡ L Ⓡ R Ⓛ L Ⓡ R Ⓛ L Ⓡ R Ⓛ R L Ⓡ L L
24
Ⓡ L R R R R Ⓛ R Ⓛ R Ⓛ R Ⓛ R L L L L Ⓡ L Ⓡ L Ⓡ L
25
Ⓡ R L R L R Ⓛ L R L R L Ⓡ R L R L R Ⓛ L R L R L
26
Ⓡ R L Ⓡ R L Ⓛ L R Ⓛ L R Ⓡ R L Ⓡ R L Ⓛ L R Ⓛ L R
27
Ⓡ L R Ⓛ L R Ⓛ R L Ⓡ R L Ⓡ L R Ⓛ L R Ⓛ R L Ⓡ R L
28
Ⓡ R R Ⓛ L R Ⓛ L L Ⓡ R L Ⓡ R R Ⓛ L R Ⓛ L L Ⓡ R L
29
Ⓡ L R Ⓛ R L Ⓡ Ⓛ Ⓡ Ⓛ Ⓡ Ⓛ Ⓡ L R Ⓛ R L Ⓡ Ⓛ Ⓡ Ⓛ Ⓡ Ⓛ

These patterns are not necessarily patterns you will use when playing, but you will be able to use the technique that you develop in any way you want. You may be able to hear a million "hip" phrases in your mind, but if you can't get them out, they won't do you any good. So these exercises are created to give you the facility to play what you hear in your mind. These exercises may also stimulate your imagination, which will, in turn, develop your own creativity.

Check out Joe's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Master Studies* at moderndrummer.com

Duet 5

By Ron Spagnardi



Ron Spagnardi wrote a terrific book called *Snare Drum Duets: 25 Duets for Two Snare Drummers*. It offers a selection of 25 challenging duets that range in difficulty from relatively simple to more complex. A wide assortment of time signatures is used throughout the book, from 2/4 and common time to 5/8, 7-8, and 12/8, among others. These snare drum duets can be used in several different ways.

Two players may use the book as written in duet format, remembering to alternate parts. The metronome marking above each duet indicates the suggested speed at which the material should be performed. However, the tempo can be adjusted up or down in accordance with the ability of the players. Obviously precise execution and perfect timing are essential on the part of both players when performing the material in duet format.

For those working with the book without the benefit of a second player snare drum parts one and two can be practiced as individual solos for improvement of basic reading skills. Conscientious practice of the material in snare drum duets will most definitely improve both reading and technical skills, regardless of the manner in which the book is utilized.

Duet 5 is written to played at a slow tempo. At the beginning of this duet the space between the notes (at this slow tempo) is magnified. As the rhythms get denser, the way the rhythms appear visually in 6/8 may become a challenge. All in all, it's a nice duet that will challenge your sense of time and your reading in 6/8.

Check out Ron's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Snare Drum Duets* at moderndrummer.com

1928 Ludwig "Ludwigold" The "Rajah-Supreme" Trap Set

By Tim Northup

Drum finishes are an interesting part of drum history. In 1926, Ludwig introduced a textured gold sparkle painted finish called "Stipelgold." This was quickly replaced in 1927 with the "New Ludwigold Iridescent Display Finish." In 1927, the Ludwig drum company was busy experimenting with other new finishes for drums. Prior to 1928, the only finish choices were stained wood in mahogany, maple, walnut, and birds eye maple; and painted shells in black ebonized or white enamel. Meanwhile, in 1926 the Leedy Drum company was the first to show a pyralin wrapped drum. George Way from Leedy has been credited as the first to apply a wrap to a drum. The wonderful New Marine Pearl Finish was proudly shown on the last page of the May 1926 Leedy Topics newsletter. Leedy stated that Marine pearl is a Dupont product, harder than most woods, with a surface as smooth as glass, and that sparkles like hundreds of small mirrors! Ludwig would follow, but they did not introduce their "pearl" wrapped finishes until 1928, and their new finish was only offered on Ludwig professional grade bass and snare drums. Along with the new "Ludwigold" finish, Ludwig's pearl colors were offered in emerald green, marble pearl, lavender, turquoise blue, peacock pearl, and avalon pearl. I find it amazing that today's choices for wrapped finishes is

less than 100 years old! The drum set has come along way in this short time.

This month, we bring you a rare 1928 Ludwig Ludwigold The Rajah Supreme Trap Set. As stated earlier, the Ludwigold finish was only available from 1927-1930, that's why I am dating this set as 1928. The set is listed and described in the catalog as follows, "The No. 1120-CL, 'Rajah-Supreme' outfit is a supreme combination of parts, color, and balance. The shell of both the snare and bass drum are finished with the new Glittering Ludwigold, (the) smooth surface contrasting beautifully with the DeLuxe (gold) plated drum trimmings."

New Ludwigold Irridescent Display Finish
Super-Ludwig Snare Drum
Genuine Ludwigold
Center-Support Bass Drum

The 14x28 bass drum is a separate tension "Aero-Kraft" mahogany shell with the Ludwigold badge. The bass drum has an optional factory painted head in "Mountain and Lake scene," costing an additional $12.00, and a factory installed blinker light kit, costing $10.00. The snare drum is a 5x14 Super Ludwig Professional model, both the snare and the bass drum are finished in Ludwigold.

The accessories shown with this kit are the following: Professional snare stand, Ludwig foot pedal and clanger cymbal, bass drum muffler, a set of three tuned cowbells, a double set of two-toned woodblocks, a Chinese tom with holder, double arm cymbal holder with a 13" Zenjian cymbal and a 12" Chinese cymbal, and a Perfection "sock" cymbal with Ludwig cymbals. Also shown with this set are period correct Ludwig drumsticks and brushes. This set (as shown) was listed for $179.50. Adding the cost of the painted head and light kit brings the 1928 total cost of this set to $201.50!! That is about $3500.00 in today's money!

This set is a real time capsule in wonderful original condition that has aged gracefully in its 96 years. In those years, the finish on the snare and bass drum has darkened from its once gleaming finish. I would love to have seen it brand new in its magnificent and bright glory. The deluxe gold hardware shows its age, but it's all original and complete. Both drums have the original Ludwig calf heads, including a snare head that has a stamped logo reading "Ludwig Whitecalf." The factory painted "Mountain and Lake Scene" is in near mint condition, and is one of the finest, brightest examples that I have ever seen.

Northup Drums Museum is very fortunate and proud to own such a fine example of a Ludwigold cataloged kit. If you would like to see this in person, and even play it! Visit **www.northupdrums.com** or call 607-434-4769 and book your appointment today to visit the museum.

OUT NOW!

Modern Drummer enjoys spotlighting new recordings that have the drums at the center of their sound. These recordings might be drummer-led, or just include a high-quality, special, or unique drumming and musical performances from the drummer and/or musicians in the band. Out Now is not restricted to only recordings, we will also be spotlighting new books and DVD's that are being released. We encourage our readers to listen to the recordings that inspire them and keep looking for new musical avenues to explore. You'll never know what new music you might find inspiring! Listen and learn.

Beck Bogert & Appice

Live in Japan 1973 Live in London 1974 Box Set
Carmine Appice drums
Atco-Rhino

In 1973 when the supergroup of Beck Bogert & Appice (BBA) was formed, musicians and music lovers rejoiced with anticipation. Unfortunately, the group only lasted 13 months and one record was ever released, *until now*. When Jeff Beck died last year, he and Carmine Appice had been talking and working on getting the rare live recordings of BBA remixed and released. The two CD's of live Japan recordings that are included in this box set marked the beginning of the band, and the two CD's of live London recordings from this set marked one of the band's final performances right before the trio disbanded. The Japan recordings are amazing and bursting with fire and energy. The London recordings can't match the unbridled exhilaration of the Japan shows (nothing could,) but they are very good, and the band sounds tight. The box set package goes over the top with including a well-informed book of liner notes, a booklet of pictured memorabilia, and a poster, but it's really about the music! The live recordings in this box set catch three musicians at their peak, Beck's creativity and fire are on full display, Bogert's bass playing proves that he is one of rock's great bassists, and Carmine's drumming is powerful. The music is filled with huge grooves, blistering solos, magical improvisational moments, and (yes) a sense of humor. If you are a fan of great rock and roll and stellar musicianship, this long-awaited box set is for you.

The Immediate Family

Skin in the Game
Russ Kunkel
Quarto Valley Records

For those who might not know, The Immediate Family is a band consisting of one of the greatest rhythm sections in rock history. Drummer Russ Kunkel, bassist Leland Sklar, guitarists and songwriters Danny Kortchmar and Waddy Wachtel, and singer multi-instrumentalist Steve Postell have (together and seperately) anchored recordings by James Taylor, Don Henley, Carole King, Lyle Lovett, Phil Collins, Joni Mitchell, Keith Richards, Stevie Nicks, Jackson Browne, and literally HUNDREDS of others! *Skin in the Game* is their second recording, and we can only hope for many more. There is even a wonderful documentary about the band called *Immediate Family*. This is a band of brothers that breathes as one, the grooves are deep, the songs are fun, and the playing is perfect. Russ Kunkel is one of the most overlooked true legends of drumming. He has never played an excessive note, or a groove that didn't set a song up for success. *Skin in the Game* delivers the musical goods that we should expect from a group of hitmaking sidemen and songwriters that are finally stepping out of the shadows, and deserve to make a name for themselves, that name is The Immediate Family.

The Pineapple Thief

It Leads to This
Gavin Harrison drums
Kscope Records

There are so many bands out there that don't get the attention they deserve, and The Pineapple Thief leads the pack. Formed by songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Bruce Soord in 1999, their atmospheric melodicism is some of the best music being produced today. When drummer Gavin Harrison joined in 2017, the band took everything to a new level. Now the well-constructed tunes are driven by well designed and orchestrated grooves by a drumming phenom. Gavin's drums *always* sound fantastic, and his grooves are *always* interesting and super creative, this record is no exception. Listen to his drumming architecture on "Rubicon" and "It Leads to This" and the massive groove on "The Frost." The Pineapple Thief is super-intelligent pop delivered in 5-minute (ish) songs, not 12-minute rock symphonies featuring over the top proggy shredding. This is The Pineapple Thief's best record yet! I can't wait to hear this music played live on their upcoming tour.

One For All, featuring George Coleman

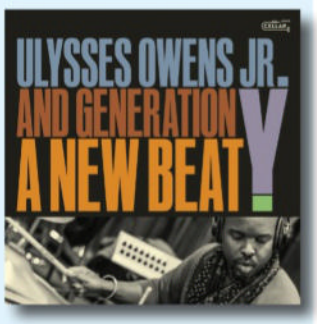
Big George
Joe Farnsworth drums
Smoke Sessions Records

After a seven-year absence One For All is back. But it's not because they have been sitting around doing nothing. It's tough to get a sextet of today's busiest jazz musicians together to record. You'll see the names Jim Rotundi, Eric Alexander,

Steve Davis, David Hazeltine, John Webber, and Joe Farnsworth on hundreds of today's best jazz recordings, but this isn't a *mail it in* "all-star" gig or record. This is a band that has been recording since 1997 and has been together even longer. I "*think*" this is their 17th recording, but who's counting? Drummer, Joe Farnsworth is in a serious "Billy Higgins mode" throughout this recording, playfully prodding and grooving without over muscular grandstanding. Although Joe's solos on "Edgerly" and "This I Dig of You" are among his best on record. Three tunes on this CD feature jazz legend tenor saxophonist George Coleman, who made his name known while playing with Miles Davis, and at the age of 87 (at the time of this recording in 2022,) "Big George" shows no evidence of slowing down. This record has a very Lee Morgan feel to it, One For All's *Big George* could stand right next to Lee's *The Rumproller, The Gigolo, Cornbread, Tom Cat,* and *The Sidewinder* recordings, and honestly much higher praise can't be given.

Ulysses Owens Jr. and Generation Y

A New Beat
Ulysses Owens Jr. drums
Cellar Music



Ulysses Owens Jr. has been focusing his efforts on education recently, teaching at Julliard in New York City and releasing several books. It's nice to hear him back behind the drums pushing his new band of young jazz musicians to the edge. Listening to his groove and solo on the opening tune "Sticks," you know you're in for an exciting ride. Owens' drumming and this record is filled with soul, it's no wonder that he has supported some of the modern jazz greats like Wynton Marsalis and Christian McBride. Ulysses' drums and cymbals sound amazing, open, and natural. I love how the band splits the difference between driving swing and funk on "Better Days," and his variation of the famous "Poinciana" groove fits perfectly on "London Towne." Roy Hargrove's song "Soulful" sets a nice vibe, but it is Jackie Mclean's "Bird Lives" that tears the roof off. The notes say this record was recorded at Van Gelder Studios, but there is an audience approving of every twist and turn so I can only think this was recorded in front of an "in-studio" and very enthusiastic audience, which adds a great touch to the musical proceedings. If Owens' Generation Y band is, (as producer Jeremy Pelt states in the liner notes) the future of jazz, we are in very good shape.

Marcus Rezak

Guitar Head
Adrian Tramontano drums
Warner Bothers Deko Entertainment

I don't know who guitarist Marcus Rezak or drummer Adrian Tramontano are, but someone should tell Living Color and Fishbone that Marcus Rezak's band has borrowed and masterfully combined their musical DNA and taken it to another level. You never know what going to happen when you drop a CD into your player to write a review— but sometimes you just laugh, shake your head, and wonder why a specific CD, musician, or band, isn't more well known. This is one of those times. What a complete musical concept this recording and these musicians have! Chops, taste, great songs, and great production. My only complaint is that the liner notes aren't printed big enough to find out more about this amazing band of killer musicians and songwriters. *I guess that's what the internet is for.* Groove on *Guitar Head*, and please keep it coming!

Daggerboard

Escapement
Mike Clarke drums
Babatunde Lea, William Winant, Mike Hughes, Gregory Howe, percussion.
Wide Hive Records

As we heard on drummer Mike Clarke's last record *Kosen Rufu*, the bass and drum pairing of bassist Henry Franklin and drummer Mike Clarke is true bedrock. You can build anything on top of it, and trumpeter-arranger Erik Jekabson and songwriter Gregory Howe do just that. I don't know who of the 17 listed musicians is the leader of Daggerboard (or if it is a true collective,) but whoever is responsible for Daggerboard *Escapement* should be commended. The all-acoustic musical soundscapes are indescribable; sometimes jazz-ish, occasionally soundtrack-ish, sometimes very funky, very arranged (and occasionally deranged,) but very creative and enjoyable. However, you describe Daggerboard, it is pleasantly aggressive, creative, and listenable music. And somehow Mike Clarke glues everything together. As drummers that's what we do. Mike Clarke is among my favorite brands of musical "glue."

Doug MacDonald

Sextet Session
Charles Ruggiero drums
Self-Produced

Guitarist Doug MacDonald has put together a nice band for his new guitar approach and his *Sextet Session*. He recently switched from playing an arch top hollow body guitar to a Telecaster. This switch in sounds and approaches didn't sway drummer Charles Ruggiero's support at all, this record swings throughout. Drummer Charles Ruggerio comes from a strong drumming family. His father Vinnie Ruggerio was a fantastic jazz drummer who played with Chuck Mangione and Slide Hampton. Vinnie Ruggiero was also one of the finest jazz drumming educators to live, *just ask Steve Gadd*! The elder Ruggiero's book, entitled *Vinnie's Book,* was assembled by Charles, who we hear on this recording, and is a treasure trove of jazz drumming education. Anyway— Doug MacDonald's new recording features one of LA's best jazz drummers in Charles Ruggiero, and I'm sure his dad would be proud. Charles' pocket is comfortable on the tune "AT #33" and his supportive swing on "Try Ads" punctuates the ensembles, and his snap crackle pushes the soloists. I like his inventive drumming approach on "Si Miner." The apple didn't fsll too far from the tree.

Christian Fabian Trio

Hip To The Skip
Jason Marsalis drums
Spice Rack Records

Bassist Christian Fabian let a nice musical project come out of the Covid lockdown, he put together a funk-fusion trio record. Gathering keyboard player Matt King and drummer Jason Marsalis in New Jersey's Mozart Studios, they created a very nice record. On the sleeve of the record Jason Marsalis states, "This is the first album I've ever done where I'm playing in the funk-fusion vein for the whole session. This was a lot of fun, and the listeners will be surprised by the music." You can always identify a New Orleans drummer by his bass drum playing, and Marsalis is no exception. Marsalis and Fabian are definitely taking care of the bottom on the tunes "Hip to the Skip," "(Funky) Four," and Marsalis' snaky "In the Name of Feminism." King's tune "Sidekick" and a funky cover of McCoy Tyner's "Effendi" are the standout tracks. But it's not all funk, listen to King's "Incognito" for a nice swing.

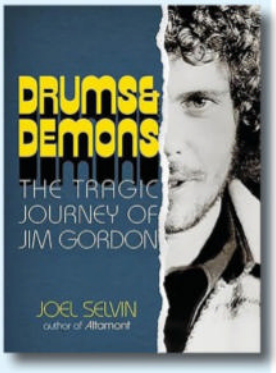
Mike Reed

The Separatist Party
Mike Reed drums
We Jazz Records- Astral Spirits

Drummer Mike Reed is a musical architect. His sculpture called *The Separatist Party* is an abstract creation that defies any musical boundaries that we might set for ourselves. This recording would find a wonderful home in the downtown musical scene of NYC in the late 90s and 2000s surrounding the musical mecca that was the Knitting Factory. Horns intertwine with electronics, and spoken word, and Mike Reed's expansive groove holds it all together. I can hear shades of Henry Threadgill, Kraftwerk, Joey Baron, Brian Eno, John Zorn, and David Byrne, *or maybe not*… Either way, Mike Reed has created a unique collection of music that has a sound, signature, and a concept. Leave it to the drummer!

Drums & Demons: The Tragic Journey of Jim Gordon

By Joel Selvin
Diversion Books



Many younger drummers might not be aware of Jim Gordon, but they all should be! It is his inclusion in Eric Clapton's Derek and the Dominoes that is usually discussed. It is his playing on a generation of hits that lives in musical lore. And it is his magical drumming that we all hold near and dear. Unfortunately, it is also the gruesome crime that he committed that must also be remembered. However, it is his suffering of, the ignoring of, and the lack of treatment and understanding for, his mental illness that we should learn from. So how do you tell this complicated story? Publisher's Weekly says it perfectly, "Without downplaying the gruesome details of Gordon's crime, Selvin gracefully portrays the musician as 'more than his disease.' Joel Sevin's affecting account sheds new light on one of rock's most complicated figures." With full cooperation from the late Gordon's family, and based on his trademark extensive and detailed research, Joel Selvin's account is an epic journey through an artist's monumental musical contributions. Along the way he tells the important history of rock drumming, and details the terrifying downward spiral into unimaginable madness that Gordon fought a valiant, but losing battle against. This is not the happiest of stories to read, but in today's troubled world, it is a necessary story to hear. For the drummer-reader it's essential learning about one of the most influential rock and studio drummers of all-time.

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HEADS: REMO Drumheads. Bass Drum: Powerstroke P4 Clear with Muff'l Control Ring, Rack and Floor Toms Top: Powerstroke P4 Clear, Rack and Floor Toms Bottom: Ambassador® Clear, Aux Gong Bass: Powerstroke® P3 Black Suede™, Snare Drums Top: Powerstroke® 77 Coated, Controlled Sound® X Coated Black Dot™, Snare Drums Bottom: AMBASSADOR® Clear Snare.
CYMBALS: SABIAN Cymbals. HI HATS: 14" HHX Complex Medium Hats, 10" AA Mini Sick Hats. CRASHES: 18" HHX Complex Thin Crash, 19" HHX Complex Thin Crash, 20" HHX Complex Thin Crash, 20" HHX Complex Aero Crash. SPLASH: 10" HHX Complex Aero. CHINAS: 17" AA Holy China Brilliant, 18" FRX Chinese. STACKS: 8" AA Mini Holy China / 10" AA Mini Holy China, 10" AAX AIR SPLASH / 16" HHX Evolution O-Zone, 18" HHX Evolution O-Zone / 19" AA HOLY CHINA.
HARDWARE: Gibraltar Rack, Mapex Drums Falcon Boom Arms Chrome, Mapex Drums Falcon Snare Stand Chrome, Mapex Drums Falcon Hi Hat Stand Chrome, Mapex Drums Falcon Single Bass Drum Pedal, Porter & Davies BC2 Rackmount Tactile Drum Monitor with Saddle Throne Top.
COWBELL: MEINL PERCUSSION Kenny Aronoff Signature Hand Hammered Steel Cowbell.
ELECTRONICS: Roland - TM-6 PRO Trigger Module, BT-1 Bar Trigger Pad (3), V-Pad PDX-8 (2), RT-30K (1), RT-30H (2).
MICROPHONES : All sE Electronics Mics. KICK OUTSIDE: V KICK, KICK INSIDE: BL8, MAIN SNARE TOP: V7 X, MAIN SNARE BOTTOM: V7 X, SIDE SNARE 1 TOP: V BEAT, SIDE SNARE 2 TOP: V BEAT,HH: V7, RACK TOMS: V BEAT, FLOOR TOMS: V BEAT & V KICK, OVERHEADS: RN17, TALK BACK: V7 CHROME CUSTOM ENGRAVING.
DRUMSTICKS: PROMARK Will Kennedy Hickory Drumstick.
IN-EAR MONITORS: JH AUDIO JH16V2, ALBATROS AUDIO PH 9B Headphone Audio Amplifier.
ACCESSORIES: Meinl MC-PT 18x12 Percussion Table.
Photos by Jason Mehler

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